

# Lahore 1947

Ahmad Salim

Introduction by Ian Talbot



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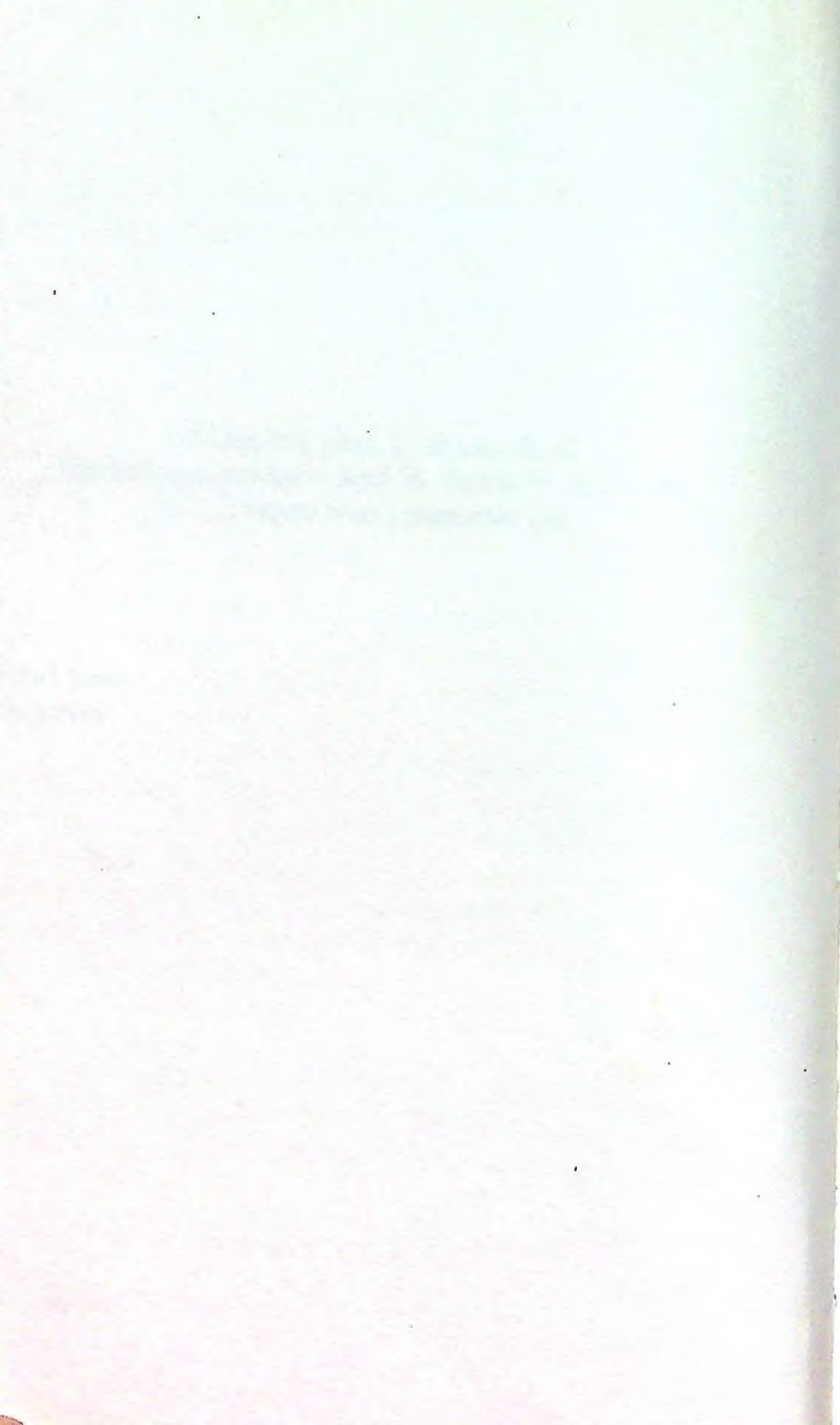




*To the people of India and Pakistan,  
for whom, in search of hope, time has remained still  
and memories grown deeper .....!!*

*Anuj Bahri*  
Publisher





## Introduction

The 1947 partition remains the defining moment in the modern history of the Indian subcontinent. Contemporary communal and national stereotypes draw sustenance from the climacteric events which accompanied the British decision to divide and quit. Partition permanently altered the demographic, socio-economic and cultural landscapes of such major cities as Karachi, Lahore, Delhi and Calcutta. Their huge refugee populations have also profoundly impacted upon these conurbations' political life. The continuing effects of partition at political, cultural and psychological levels extend far beyond the focus on Kashmir which has sometimes been dubbed 'the unfinished business' of partition. They point to the fact that partition should be regarded as a process rather than a single historical event confined to August 1947.

The emotional intensity of the partition process has resulted in a vast cultural outpouring on both sides of the Wagah border. Some of the greatest works of Urdu literature<sup>1</sup> have been produced in response to the trauma. Saadat Hassan Manto's short story, 'Toba Tek Singh' has become a symbol of the confused and torn identities arising from separation from one's ancestral home. Rajinder Singh Bedi's 'Lajwanti' sensitively uncovers the agonies engendered by the abduction and recovery of women who were partition's 'greatest sufferers'. The humanist approach to the communal violence has been expressed in the works of Krishan Chander and other progressive writers. Some of the best known Indian writings in English have been produced on the

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1. John A. Hanson, 'Historical Perspectives in the Urdu Novel', in M. U. Memon, ed., *Studies in the Urdu Gazal and Prose Fiction* (Madison, 1979), pp. 257-84; M. U. Memon, 'Partition Literature: A Study of Intizar Husain', *Modern Asian Studies*, 14, 3 (1980), pp. 377-410.



partition theme by such luminaries as Bapsi Sidhwa, Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal. A number of these works have been made into films. Doordarshan in 1988 serialised Bhisham Sahni's moving Hindi novel *Tamas* which is set in the partition period.

Partition has until recently fitted less easily into historical discourses than popular culture. Academic history concentrated on the 'high politics' of the British departure from India, rather than on the human dimension of its impact. The work of Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India, 1936-1947* (Delhi, 1987) and R. J. Moore, *Escape from Empire: The Attlee Government and the Indian Problem* (Oxford, 1982) exemplify this concern with causes rather than consequences. They revealed how the British came to accept the idea of partition as the only solution to the communal problem which imperilled a speedy and smooth transfer of power. Moore provided the first authoritative examination of Labour Party strategies and policies towards the transfer of power, Singh argued forcefully that the British short-term aims of encouraging the Muslim League as a counterweight to the non-cooperating Congress during the Second World War undermined their long-term commitment to a United India.

For many years, Indian and Pakistani nationalist historical discourses reduced partition to a mere footnote as they dwelt on the triumph of independence rather than its costs. The field was thus left open for communalist writings which for their own purposes emphasised violence, always with the aim to attribute blame to the 'other' party. It was in fact not until almost the golden jubilee of independence that historians began to construct a historical discourse on partition 'from beneath.'

This enterprise required new sources. Such writers as

Mushirul Hasan<sup>2</sup> began to turn to fictional representations to uncover human feelings and emotions. Much of the most exciting work on the 'new' history of partition has relied on the oral accounts of previously silenced and marginalised social groups. A gendered dimension to partition has emerged powerfully, for example, from the works of Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin<sup>3</sup> and Urvashi Butalia<sup>4</sup>. The extent to which partition evoked cross-community cooperation as well as brutality and violence is beginning to be uncovered in a major research project by the leading academic and intellectual figure Ashis Nandy. He too is relying extensively on interviews conducted by research teams in both India and Pakistan.

Alongside the concern to recover authentic voices, there has been the realisation that conventional histories which end in August 1947, limit our understanding of partition's continuing impact. The important issues of refugee rehabilitation and resettlement were at the centre of official and semi-official studies in the 1950s, as exemplified by M.S. Randhawa's work, *Out of the Ashes*,<sup>5</sup> but they have been largely neglected since. Growing concern with the aftermath of the subcontinent's division has placed the locality at the forefront of study. Historians have realised that province wide generalisations concerning patterns of violence, migration and resettlement cannot account for the considerable variety of refugee experiences. The locality provides the locus for studying how different economic and social groups experienced the complex realities of the partition process. In many instances these are

2. M. Hasan (ed) *India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom*, Vols.1 and 2 (New Delhi, 1995).
3. R. Menon and K. Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries, Women in India's Partition* (Delhi, 1998).
4. U. Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence. Voices from the Partition of India* (New Delhi, 1998).
5. M.S. Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes.: An Account of the Rehabilitation of Refugees from West Pakistan in Rural Areas of East Punjab* (Bombay, 1954).



seen to be interrogating the stylised and stereotypical portrayals of nationalist and communalist discourses. In their recent edition, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya begin to examine the experiences of different localities through a consideration of the imprint of partition on South Asian capital cities.<sup>6</sup>

Lahore provides an important localised context for this new approach to partition's impact. It was the pre-eminent educational, commercial and administrative centre of the Punjab, the region most affected by India's division.. The fact that it was inhabited by around 240,000 Hindus and Sikhs who at the time of the 1941 Census accounted for a third of its total population.<sup>7</sup> further increases its value as a case study. Much of the city's wealth derived from the commercial activities of its minority communities. Virtually all the shops in the famous Anarkali Bazaar which stretched for a mile outside the walled city from Lohari Gate to Nila Gumbad were in their hands. Older established commercial centres in the walled city such as the area around Shah Almi Gate and Chuna Mandi were also non-Muslim.

In all, Hindus and Sikhs owned two thirds of the city's shops, four fifths of its factories and paid seven tenths of its urban taxes. In addition to the dominant Hindu and Sikh localities with their distinctive architectural styles, economic and ritual life, non-Muslims conspicuously occupied the new schools and colleges, banks, offices and courts established by the British. Despite the Mughal splendours of Shah Jehan's Shalimar Gardens, Akbar's imposing Fort and Aurangzeb's massive Badshahi Mosque, Lahore was not an Islamic city, but rather possessed a cosmopolitan feel. This still shines through

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6. See Chapter Seven of Tan Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia* (London, 2000).  
7. The 1941 Census enumerated the Muslim population at 433,170 and the non-Muslim at 238,489.

in the nostalgia of such works by former Hindu residents as Pran Neville's *Lahore. A Sentimental Journey*<sup>8</sup> and Som Anand's. *Lahore: Portrait of a Lost City*.<sup>9</sup> Unsurprisingly, the city was at the centre of conflicting claims, when the boundary commission chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe went through its deliberations in July 1947.

Ultimately, numbers not wealth counted in the judgement on which side of the new international boundary Lahore would lie. Within the Lahore district, Muslims accounted for three-fifths of the total population. In the city of Lahore itself, the proportion of Muslims was slightly higher, although Hindu politicians claimed that this was the product of boundary changes which had 'gerrymandered' the inclusion of Muslim outlying villages in the city boundaries. The award of Lahore to Pakistan was only made public the day after independence. By that stage, extensive areas of the city which had been inhabited by Hindus and Sikhs were in ruins<sup>10</sup> following weeks of what has been termed a 'communal war of succession' in the city. The cosmopolitan, 'Paris of the East' was a distant and poignant memory.

Most studies refer to Lahore only in passing when talking about the Punjab's partition. Muslim violence against Hindus and Sikhs in the West Punjab was chronicled albeit in a partisan manner in works by Talib and Khosla.<sup>11</sup> Counterpart studies have been produced in Pakistan including such titles as *The Sikhs in Action*, *Note on the Sikh Plan* and *RSSS in Punjab*<sup>12</sup> designed to

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8. Pran Neville, *Lahore. A Sentimental Journey* (New Delhi, 1993).

9. S. Anand, *Lahore. Portrait of a Lost City* (Lahore, 1998).

10. By mid-July 1947 over 700 Hindu and Sikh houses had been burnt down.

11. S. Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Muslim League Attack on Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab 1947* (Allahabad, 1950); G. D. Khosla, *Stern Reckoning. A Survey of Events Leading Upto and Following the Partition of India* (New Delhi, 1989).

12. West Punjab Government, *The Sikhs in Action* (Lahore, 1948); West Punjab Government, *Note on the Sikh Plan* (Lahore 1948); West Punjab Government, *RSSS in the Punjab* (Lahore, 1948).

show that Muslim attacks in such localities as Lahore were in retaliation for the earlier genocide of Muslims in the Indian East Punjab. The most detailed account of developments within the city has been compiled by the Pakistan Government in a work entitled, *Disturbances in the Punjab 1947*.<sup>13</sup> The work draws on a range of official and party documents, including Lahore Special Branch reports to chronicle the violence from its beginnings on March 3, 1947 through to the aftermath of partition.

This edited volume brings together writings in English and Urdu translation which shed light on Lahore's five-month descent to chaos from March 1947. Some of the pieces are well known autobiographical accounts of such prominent non-Muslim intellectuals as Khushwant Singh and Som Anand who worked and lived in the city on the eve of the British departure. Pran Neville whose book, *Lahore: A Sentimental Journey* has served as a landmark in both India and Pakistan provides a brief personal account of his journey to Delhi in the wake of the violence which followed the resignation of Khizr Tiwana's Unionist-led coalition government early in March.

Well-known contributions by former Hindu and Sikh residents are balanced by the accounts from less famous Muslim inhabitants. The piece in Urdu translation by Mian Amiruddin, the Mayor of Lahore on 'Memories of Partition' represents a fresh contribution which is of considerable interest to the historian. It lays bare the conflicting and ambiguous emotions at the time. On the one hand, individuals like Amiruddin could save the lives of members of other communities at considerable personal risk. Simultaneously they could gloat at the removal of their "enemies" symbolic and physical presence. The bleak sadistic

13. Government of Pakistan, *Disturbances in the Punjab 1947. A Compilation of Official Documents* (Islamabad, 1995).



brutality of the partition era, emerges in a number of the contributions. It is in part uplifted in Satish Gujral's contribution which points to refugee columns not only supplying each other with water and other necessities when their paths crossed, 'but more significantly with profound emotional understanding.'

What emerges from the edition is both the sense of helplessness and the belief that despite the spiralling violence, non-Muslim residents who fled West Punjab would one day return. In the poignant words of Prakash Tandon, 'the thought that this was a going away for ever, never crossed anybody's mind.' These sentiments are mirrored in interviews conducted with their Muslim counterparts who were driven from their ancestral homes in East Punjab.

The edition points up the anticipatory flight of non-Muslims from Lahore before the demarcation of the boundary. The destruction of the Hindu stronghold of Shahalmi marked a crucial turning point in this respect. It also reveals, especially in the piece from Fakr Taunsvi, the psychological effects of Lahore's curfew-ridden 'war of communal succession.' 'The air was full of suspicion and terror,' Taunsvi noted in his diary, 'that made you think that everyone had a dagger or a bomb hidden on their person.'

The selections provide clues as to why communal harmony broke down in the Punjab. The arrival of refugees with tales of atrocities supported by the gruesome evidence of trainloads of corpses encouraged revenge attacks on minority communities. In the longer term, Lahore and more generally Punjab can be seen as a victim of political uncertainties and communal polarisation elsewhere in India. Contributions also hint at the fact that relations between communities had been correct, but

lacked warmth. Social distance, as vividly brought out in B.C. Sanyal's account arose in part because of high caste Hindu concerns about pollution and inter dining. Such attitudes rather than the non-Muslim domination of Lahore's wealth and commerce provided the undercurrent for the politicisation of identities during the Pakistan movement. The Muslim League's claims that Muslims could only live in dignity in their own homeland were not just rhetorical slogans, but struck a popular chord.

From the minorities' perspective, it was not just the circumstances of the 1946 elections and the subsequent bitter campaign against the Tiwana government which prevented their acceptance of a future within Pakistan. But the sense both of superiority which is hinted at in some of these extracts and the fact that a neo-Hindu and Sikh identity had been constructed since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century around hostility to the Muslim 'other' based in part on a selective reading of the 'oppression' of Mughal rule.

Ahmad Salim is well-equipped for the task of producing a collection which casts different lights on the partition experience. A well-known poet and Urdu journalist, he has been collecting and compiling stories of partition for a number of years. He acted as my able research assistant both in advance and during a visit to Lahore in September 2000 which gathered oral histories of migration and refugee resettlement as part of a wider comparative project. He has also established his own partition-related archive dedicated to the preservation of primary material. While most of his work has been focused on the Pakistan experience, he has visited India on a number of occasions both to attend conferences and to gather further material.

This compilation thus emerges out of a sustained personal and academic engagement with the complexities surrounding the human dimension of partition. More work is required not only on developments in Lahore, but across North India, before our understanding is complete. Nevertheless, such steps along the way as represented by this volume should be applauded. They contribute not only to scholarship, but to the breaking down of the stereotypes of communal hatred which continue to afflict the subcontinent.

**Ian Talbot**

Centre for South Asian Studies  
Coventry University







***One***





# **The Sixth River : A Diary of 1947**

**Fikr Taunsvi**

**August 9**

Last evening a bomb exploded in a cinema house in Bhati Gate.

They say the bomb was of British manufacture. That is why fifty people of Indian origin were killed by it. All the dead were Muslims, so indisputably the man who threw the bomb must have been a Hindu, who, inspired by the British way of thinking, fulfilled the important duty of deciding to destroy the unclean through a British-made bomb. The bodies of the unclean were being conveyed to hospital in tongas. Some had half a leg blown away, others had open skulls, and the intestines of still others had been exposed. People were running about, hither and thither, The bazaars were shut and the roads deserted.

Arif and I could not have our evening tea in Nizam Hotel, We couldn't hold our learned conversation on politics and literature, nor could we swallow ideas about people's art and about science and philosophy with hot sips of tea. Today the hooligans of Lahore dispelled the notion hidden in the feminine bangles sent to them from Amritsar. After all, how could the brave thugs of Lahore tolerate the insulting taunt of the brave thugs of Amritsar — "You women! Put on these bangles and sit at home. This work is not for the likes of you!"

After this the brave could not sit at home, and taking out their daggers and fuses of dynamite and their bombs, pistols and swords, came out on the roads and bazaars. The result was that within an hour of the bomb explosion about a hundred and fifty cowards had been murdered and fifty houses burned to

ashes. Since the bazaars were deserted, the police had been posted to watch the beautiful sight of burning houses, and in order to bring empty roads to life again, noisy trucks carrying policemen and the military were roaming all over the place. And then, at night, the musical strains of Allah-o-Akbar and Sat Siri Akal were dispelling the sadness that pervaded the atmosphere, while crimson red flames and flying sparks from torched houses helped to illuminate the darkness.

So the bombs continued to explode, bullets were being fired all the time, people went on dying in the streets and the curfew was on. The police went on patrolling the streets so that no one dare break the law. The beauteous beloved of religion was being protected in the shade of mosques and temples. Industrialists and feudal lords opened up their cash boxes so that anyone who eyed this beloved with a sinful gaze should be shot at once. One bullet, one dead, fifty rupees! One dagger, one stabbing, sixty rupees! And the one who threw a bomb could get two hundred and fifty rupees. This was the price placed on the life of a heretic, an unclean dissenter. Human bodies were going cheap in the market. Everyone was satisfied — the rich and the poor, the rulers and the ruled.

This morning I could not get out of the house till ten o'clock. Spent the morning listening to the radio and trying to forget myself in the melodious songs of Shamshad Begum and Sehgal's ghazals. But my mind had become inert. I could find no peace in anything. Ghalib's Diwan stood on the table, staring at me. Einstein's theory of relativity lay dozing. Faiz's "Naqsh-e-Faryadi" screamed to be picked up and then lay silent. The Buddha's bust gazed at me like a dumb picture. Art, literature, philosophy, science, were all mute, all in mourning. But their grief was different from that of the washerman who lived on the ground floor and who had become the father of a tiny baby

at three in the morning, and who was worried that the bazaars were shut. The sweet-seller who sold milk had locked his shop from inside and was hiding there. He had received no supply today because all milk-vendors are Muslim, and this being a Hindu locality, they couldn't step into it. Hospitals were not functioning, neither were doctors, nurses and medicines, and both the mother and the infant were crying. The children were asking, "Will the curfew never be lifted? Shall we never get milk?"

Desperate with tension and anxiety, the washerman walked into my room. I looked towards Einstein and the Buddha and Ghalib and Iqbal. "Come on. Speak up," I said to them, "What reply have you for this man? What can you do to save his little one? If you can't get the curfew lifted, if you can't bring the nurse to this washerman's house, then why did you give us all this philosophy and literature and culture and knowledge? It is better if one of you had been a Muslim *gujjar* who could walk boldly into a Hindu locality with his milk. I wish you had the strength to ask great brains like Jawaharlal Nehru, Jinnah and other statesmen and maulvis to wear the guise of this unlettered washerman for a moment. Then you may go and request the British to give you freedom. Then demand Pakistan and Hindustan. Then you will have permission to hold conferences with Labour leader Cripps and Lord Mountbatten, and inform them that we despise each other, that we shall wring one another's necks. We can do without freedom, but we cannot tolerate that there should be two swords in one scabbard, that two civilisations should coexist in one country. Tell them to draw a line between us and proclaim that we are unconnected and no longer one. Beyond the line the Hindu will rule, this side the Muslim will prevail. Divide our rivers, cut our mountains into two, and also cleave our Punjab into two. Divide our Ravi and Beas, divide our heroines Heer and Sohni. Otherwise —



otherwise we shall suffer to be cut into pieces but not let ourselves be free. Never!"

But the Mahatma, Buddha and Iqbal stared back at me, mute and dumb. The washerman wept while Shamshad sang, "Oh, the lovely rain!"

## August 11

As the curfew lifted this morning after 24 oppressive and soul-searing hours, I went out. Life was making itself felt again, though in a half-hearted and dampened manner. The fear and tension of the past day still infected the atmosphere, and people stepped out of their houses with care and caution. The air was full of suspicion and terror that made you think that everyone had a dagger or a bomb hidden on their person which they would use any moment against the enemy. People would pause to look behind them, as if all others who walked the streets were not their co-citizens but their enemies. Hundreds of the enemy, each one of them frightened within himself, had emerged from their homes. They were nobody's friends.

After wandering around for a while, I got on to the road in the purely Muslim locality that led to my office and where a bomb had exploded three days before. I went this way out of habit, a habit that was embedded in my personal culture. What else could I do? Taking a safer way would be unacceptable to my nature and would amount to mental torture. At one point I was surrounded by flames and smoke as a magnificent building near my office burned with a loud crackling noise. A large crowd was gathered to watch it. It was a strange crowd, consisting of both Hindus and Muslims, and all of them trying to put out the fire. For a moment the conflagration united the two cultures, the two religions. I welcome such a fire, I bow before it with

respect, and I am ready to sacrifice at its altar all the world's ideals of philosophy, literature and knowledge for blessing the Hindus and Muslims with a common grief on this eleventh of August.

The upper storey of the structure bore its name: Bishan Das Building. About the ground floor it was stated that it was occupied by a firm of book-binders where scores of workers were employed to bind printed copies of the Holy Quran. Both were on fire: the building of the Hindu and the Quran of the Muslim. On the upper floor some people were trying to extricate the body of a boy of seven or eight from under a heavy girder. So, up above Bishan Das's son was burning while below Muhammad's Quran was in flames. God's law was in flames. And Hindus and Muslims were jointly trying to extinguish the fire. Two swords in one scabbard!

I began to enjoy the spectacle. I had never seen in history anything to match this. We were writing a new kind of history. I walked away. At about ten paces I saw a withered old man lying in a corner with his mouth open. Blood was oozing out of his mouth and his chest. His sightless eyes gazed at the sky, while a policeman brandishing a stick guarded his body. In the square ahead the corpse of a thirty-year-old young man rested tranquilly under the caring protection of a sub-inspector of police and five of his men. By his side lay a cloth packet from which wheat flour had burst out. The killer had run away because he was in a hurry. Maybe he had to dispose of a few more heretics before he went home for the day. He didn't even wait for the policemen, one of whom was muttering, "These people have been warned so many times not to go through localities where there is danger, but they don't listen." The torn packet of flour was unable to say anything to this.

After locating Arif, I went with him to a Muslim's restaurant

to have lunch. The place was more noisy than usual. Most of the people talked in whispers while a few were shouting in a loud voice:

"We'll tear these Sikhs to pieces!"

"We'll drink the blood of these Hindus!"

"We'll not let any of their children go alive!"

This storm of anger and passion was enough to create panic. We were told that the morning had seen the arrival from Amritsar of lorries full of harassed policemen and screaming Muslims. The policemen had been let loose by their officers for they had achieved Pakistan. Maybe the officers thought they no longer needed to work under Hindus in a kind of bondage. They had been disarmed and had fled for their lives. In Lahore they spread all over the city and the volcano of blood and fire had again erupted. A man with a short beard was shouting, "God save us! Have you heard? Nearly 120 people have been murdered since the morning. This city is in for a terrible time."

Arif was in a panic. He was worried about my safety. Suddenly the restaurant began to be closed and everyone rushed out. A crowd shouting slogans was passing on the road while a vehicle hurtled by with the announcement, "From 12 noon curfew has again been imposed, curfew for 90 hours!" I said to Arif that the number of curfew hours had been increased because figures of serious crimes were going up. Crime and curfew were inter-connected. I don't know from where the packet of flour crops up in all this to disturb the mind.

I proceeded towards Anarkali. I didn't want to become curfew-bound at home. As I crossed the Mall,<sup>7</sup> the leading literary figures of India emerged from the coffee house. Their art and their writings were not more sacred than the curfew, so, in a

frenzy of alarm, they were hurrying home — Bari, Salahuddin, Yusuf, Mittal. In his typical style Mittal said to me, "Well Fikr, what about going away to India? I'm leaving." I counselled him, "Friend, the curfew will start soon. Go home. In any case you won't be able to leave this country of free people before 90 hours. Better go home now." All the time I was thinking, "Where is this progressive writer off to?"

My head was about to burst. To me it seemed as if I was not in my senses. As I passed by Rahbar's house, I remembered that Comrade Rahbar had left the city a few days ago. His parting words were still ringing in my ears, "I'm going but I'll come back. I'll come back. I'll surely come back." There was the sound of guilt in his repeated affirmation. Bored by this I had retorted, "Go, comrade, go away." Then, instead of going home, I went towards Jagdish's place.

I felt a hammering on my brain. My nerves were on edge, as if they would explode and destroy my body. The continuous sharp chain of the morning's turmoil enveloped me in its tight embrace. Jagdish was not at home, but his servant was busy packing up and putting his things in a heap in the courtyard. Jagdish had gone to find a truck. So, he was also going. That lover of Iqbal, the votary of Islam, the poet of Urdu, was also running away. Mittal was on his way to India. Rahbar had already left. Kapoor was off. And I was being hounded by sleep. Sleep, oblivious of exploding bombs, impervious to the rat-tat-tat of bullets, not caring a hoot for fleeing poets and writers, sleep was overtaking me. I'm going to sleep!

## **August 12**

I fled from Jagdish's house. He was overwhelmed with worry and frustration which he expressed in loud, literary and



intellectual terms. I was getting afraid for him. He was saying, "Brother Fikr, it is no longer possible for me to live here. I have loved this city all my life. But now it is like a mad dog. Today many lorries full of dead and wounded Muslims arrived here from Amritsar and they have stoked the fire of vengeance in the city. Go and see, all the Hindus of Lahore are being slaughtered like goats and sheep and are running to the refugee camps to save themselves. No one will live here now. Neither I nor you. No one. Where will you go? Let's go away to India. Are you ready?"

I told him I was going to Multan.

"Multan!" he exclaimed with astonishment. "You'll go to Multan? Idiot. Multan is now in Pakistan. Have you gone mad? Are you in your senses? The railway station presents the scene of a holocaust. Hundreds have been killed there since the morning, and you are talking of going to Multan. All right. Tell me. Will you buy my radio set, this bed, this wardrobe? What will you give for them? Let me have a hundred rupees and take everything. Okay?"

I ran from Jagdish's house, like a mouse extricating itself from the paws of a cat. He had set up shop. Tell me, tell me, what will you buy? Do you want Lahore? The waves of the Ravi? Eight annas for every wave. Ranjit Singh's mausoleum? Ten annas for a brick. Sitla Mandir? Six annas for every idol. The Mall itself? I'll take a rupee for every furlong. Speak up. What do you want to buy?

What am I to do? I cannot live in this maddening atmosphere. On the streets of Santnagar people were running in groups, loaded with their goods. I shut my eyes to them; put my fingers in my ears. Some Hindu boys had broken open the shop of a Muslim vegetable-seller and were throwing his wares

— bananas, guavas and oranges — into the gutter and were laughing away and singing at their achievement. They were drunk with fun and pleasure. I hung my head and walked away, going on and on. Slowly. Maybe I was going towards my house, or was I aiming at the refugee camp? Perhaps it was to The Mall to have a cup of coffee in the coffee house.

The coffee house was shut. Today Lahore's writers and poets and politicians and philosophers and historians had not been able to come out. Miraculously, as if filling a vacuum, an omnibus of Route No.4 drove up. I jumped into it, without thinking where it would take me, and when. It stopped at the Regal Cinema, for beyond that was the danger area.

### August 14

What an extraordinary day! It obsessed me the whole night.

That slim, diminutive short story writer clung to the sides of my brain like a lizard. I don't want to fling him away because I find him absorbing. I am interested in his vague tangled talk. When he speaks it is as if a Plato is hiding in his soul. His apparently imprecise conversation confuses me. My boredom takes the form of irritation. Even so I enjoy this boredom, this irritation, because he admits defeat at every step. Though despite this admission his Plato does not succeed in attaining nirvana. Actually he is not easy to describe, like the gloaming between night and day.

And yesterday, in the gathering dusk, when I was wandering most foolishly, and with a kind of bravado, on the lonely, uninhabited road full of unpredictable dangers, he could not reconcile himself to my presence there. Peering at me closely

he was trying to find out why this slim, diminutive man who could lose his senses at the sound of a challenge from a Muslim street-killer, whose spirituality, art, and poetry, and more especially his religion, could be done to death with the point of a dagger — why is he going about with such mindless courage on this perilous road in the raging hurricane of blood and fire, as if his death is not necessary to sustain Islam? Why?

Death with all its horrors awaited the unwary on Lahore's roads and bazaars, at street corners, on closed shop-fronts. It peeped out of the eyes of Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs. Only its satanic gaze did not seem to fall on this slim diminutive poet. Or maybe death is intimidated by his manner, his readiness to approach it with open eyes. You man, it says, who are you? Don't come like this towards me. You don't even know how to walk into the valley of death? Go away. Away! Get out of my sight, you idiot! Go and roam the roads and alleys. I have not been able to understand you. What's your name? What's your religion? People with a faith like yours are not fit to be victims of these times of barbarity, of terror, of blood-thirsty animal instincts. Who are you looking for, by the way? You wish to meet Mumtaz? Do you trust him? That Muslim? You think there is no Islamic spirit and passion left in him that he can't even spare a dagger thrust for you? Don't you know that one dagger can kill twenty, thirty, forty people? It can show the road to eternal peace and salvation to two hundred and forty million deities. It can deal a death blow to the awakened spirit of Islam in seventy million Muslims. Just one dagger . . . What kind of a man are you?

Yes. Looking at the strange sight that I presented, with my eyes towards the sky, every hair on Mumtaz's body became tense. Like the sharp edges of a sword lines of sweat formed deep furrows on his face. "Is that really you?"

"Yes," I replied, trying to look worried.

"Where are you going? Don't go. That road passes through the locality where firing went on the whole night. Don't go, in this darkness . . ." He gave me this advice instinctively, without thinking, but somewhat fearfully.

I said to him, "The fact is, yaar, I can't live in Santnagar now. I feel that I will die there and for no good reason. My brain will burst. I am not going anywhere, I have come to stay. I shall stay with you, as long as you do not forget the courtesy of refuge, of protection. There, in Santnagar, I feel stifled among my co-religionists, my Hindu brothers. They are all minor gods, and now the gods are fleeing. They are fleeing from their homes, their courtyards, their streets, their loves, their hates, their habits and their feelings. In fact they are running away from themselves. Why? Why are they running away, Mumtaz? Will this quench the flames of these burning buildings? Will the exploding bombs run away too, along with blood-drenched human beings and these ear-splitting slogans of Bhagwan and Allah? Will these too run away? Tell me, Mumtaz, tell me. I don't know what to do. Should I too run away? But where? I don't know the etiquette of fleeing. If I try to flee I won't know how to find my way out in these numerous ways. Does this way go to your house? You, who were born in a Muslim household, and take this path every day, and are never afraid for a moment; and I who have forgotten the way home and take the way to your house, and am not afraid for a moment, is this the wrong road for me? Do you know where this road ends, Mumtaz? Do you?"

I kept making this purposeless and meaningless speech, trying to overawe his mind. He took me inside to his sitting room, and threw cigarettes and matches before me. With my head resting on the back of the chair and my feet planted on a



bed in the room, I began to smoke. He went inside to get tea for me, but I'm sure he was saying to himself, "What foolishness! But then, what else can he do except be foolish, and terrified." Then he addressed me. "You are safe here. Don't worry about anything. No one will look at you with a threatening eye here." And, as he served tea, he continued to console me. And as I drank his tea, I listened to him. At last I asked him, "What do you think of the philosophy of Confucius?"

What a day it was! I can't get it out of my mind.

### **August 15**

The whole night the radio screamed "Freedom! Freedom!"

Today we are free of white imperialism. Mumtaz is happy that our politics has at last found a stable conclusion. Early in the morning I went into his room with an agonised face. Do you know, Mumtaz, that at one minute past midnight we were free, and there was firing the whole night. What has not been freed are Allah-o-Akbar! and Har Har Mahadev! and Sat Sri Akal!. The whole night they were shouting in protest at the top of their voices what sounded like "We don't want to be liberated. We want to remain alive. Freedom will be our death."

I don't know what was wrong with me this morning. I felt as if I had been dipped in a pool of poison during the night. Sparks of hate, irony and savagery flared out of my body, and I was murmuring to myself the verse: "O life, what is this place where you have stopped?"

Mumtaz said, "Are you unhappy at getting freedom?" But I continued to sing that verse to myself. Then he added, "Come, let us celebrate to welcome freedom."

"Yes, Mumtaz, you are right. We should welcome this fairy. We'll greet it with the piles of dead bodies of Hindus and Sikhs and Muslims, with burning buildings and murderous bombs. Haven't you heard? Delhi and Karachi were decorated like brides last night and were celebrating their weddings with music and dance and noisy carousel. It was their night of love. And what did we do in the Punjab, in Lahore? In this night of love the earthen pot of Sohni, the bangles of Heer, the waving fields of corn, gave the final sacrifice of their innocent children, their young virgins, their greying old people and their manly youths."

Disgusted with my emotional harangue, Mumtaz asked if I would like some tea. His eyes betrayed his thoughts: "From where has this man got so much poison within him? Why is he trying to hide stark reality behind a façade of sentiment? What we are facing today is reality, the truth. His tears cannot wash away that truth."

Perhaps Mumtaz was thinking that I hate the rapture that the young man derived from fixing the Star and Crescent atop the secretariat building. No, no, he cannot hate that happiness. Then what? Perhaps, perhaps . . . His senses were again confused. Why can't he analyse the hatred in my soul? He is a psychologist, an expert in probing the human mind. Why is he unable to understand me? He was getting more and more certain that I'm an idiot.

"Yes, an idiot, Mumtaz. The whole of India is dancing with happiness to the tunes of joyful music. But why don't these waves of rejoicing find an echo in me? Mumtaz, tell me the reason for the death of their echo." I kept saying this with my gaze fixed on the ceiling. But where within me lay hidden the secret of their death?

Yesterday while we were talking, I had told Mumtaz about the spine-chilling sight I had seen on the Ichhra road. An angry crowd, armed with staves, was gathered in front of a place of worship. The charred dead bodies of the worshippers were being loaded on to a military truck. The sturdy army jawans had come in the morning to save these corpses and, extracting them from the burnt-out building, were throwing them into the truck, like sacks of putrefying grain.

The two of us didn't venture out of the house the whole day. On this day of freedom, we remained imprisoned indoors. Something would try to come out of me and stick in my throat. We had innumerable cups of tea. Many times Mumtaz asked me to go out with him and see the flag of freedom waving on the buildings, instead of the Union Jack. People must be going mad with joy at becoming independent, he said. But I couldn't move. It was as if my feet had forgotten how to walk. I could not bear the thought of witnessing the expression of wild happiness. What sort of joy was this that it contained no rapture? What kind of wine was it that it did not inebriate? What form of music was this that it was emerging in the shape of tears? Turn off this music! Throw away this harp! And go to sleep, go to sleep. Shut your eyes. Let the Joint Defence Council be on the watch. Let the Boundary Commission keep vigil. So that when you open your eyes you may see nine million people soaked in their own blood. Your awakening will be greeted by destroyed habitations, cities razed to the ground, shrivelled harvests and dried up rivers. By that time the protectors and guardians will have left. And in any case, what need will there be for protection after that?

Sounds of wailing and weeping were coming from the ground floor of the building. Mumtaz told me that a family had arrived there from Amritsar. Out of a household of fifteen those

who had survived were just two five-year-olds, a girl of seventeen and an old man. Oh my God!

### August 17

There has been the most horrendous news during the last two days. Contrary to all expectations, we have not been able to remain in peace after winning our freedom. Lahore and Amritsar have spread the flames of their fires to East and West. Twelve of the Punjab's districts have been declared riot-affected areas and handed over to a British army officer, because the representatives of sovereign governments have no time from festivity. They have no doubt about the integrity of the British, because the bonafides of a nation which can withdraw from the gold mine of India can only be suspected by a madman. The British officer is loth to see the joint culture of the Punjab being destroyed. That is why he has posted Muslim army units in areas where Hindus and Sikhs are in a majority, and deputed Hindu and Sikh soldiers in Muslim districts, so the free army of this free country may do its duty unhindered. However, despite this obviously sincere measure, heartrending reports continue to pour in.

Reports come in. So do dead bodies. There are hordes of the wounded and the maimed; people wailing and weeping. Why is all this? Why these wounded and their cries? It is said that the military is decimating the killers and murderers, but one doesn't see any killers among the wounded, among the dead. The Muslims think it is Hindu and Sikh villains who are responsible for barbarous acts, while the Hindus and Sikhs maintain that it is because of Muslim scoundrels. The only result is increase of responsibility for both sides, with a corresponding increase in the number of the dead. We have gone back to the Stone Age. Apparently British politicians and statesmen think that unless we recede to the Stone Age, we cannot attain Nirvana and the true taste of freedom.





# Pakistan is Born

Alys Faiz

We had half a house on Racecourse Road, Lahore, in the early summer days of 1947 when our parents came to India.

It was an old house and we encountered scorpions and a host of other crawlies. Parents had to be warned about bathroom walls and crevices, walking barefoot. But we forgot things like snakes and falling fans. I suppose we almost lost a younger daughter when the fan fell. Grandpa was playing with her - he would call her 'my little gel'. On that almost fateful day she rolled over towards him, suddenly, with a laugh, and then with a terrible thud the fan fell from the ceiling onto the bed, in the exact spot where 'little gel' had been lying and gurgling. We were all so shaken, so overcome with the thought of what might have been, that we decided there and then that our parents should leave for Kashmir, where they were later going anyway. So a car was booked, from Lahore to Srinagar, father loved his little luxuries. We reserved their rooms at Nedou's Hotel in Srinagar by the side of the Dal Lake. Our last luxury together were plates of strawberries and clotted cream - the strawberries came from Ludhiana. Father's 'little gel' was soon smothered in red juice!

Their letters from the side of the Dal Lake were ecstatic, and as the days passed, we, too, planned to leave. Faiz's fate was to stay in Lahore running the *Pakistan Times*.

But the rumblings of Partition were on and as Rajgarh burned, and as train after train pulled into Lahore Station loaded with its dead and injured, the girls and myself were packed off by train to Rawalpindi, from thence on to Srinagar. By this time

tales of horror had reached us, and as Faiz loaded us onto the bus for Srinagar, our hearts were heavy.

Our parents had hired a large airy house for us all, the Taseers and ourselves, and the family was united, as the country moved towards its destiny of Partition.

The house had a large garden full of fruit trees and to keep mother busy she was put in charge of the unloading of the laden trees, organising the packing of the fruit into boxes for the market. Her helpers were many, but still piles of fruit lay rotting in the grass, and we filled our larders and ate to our hearts' content. Cherries came and went, all kinds of currents, raspberries, more strawberries, plums, apricots and peaches. We were amazed at the abundance.

It was a very hot summer and even Srinagar was sweltering. But misfortune seemed to dog us. Mother suffered a very severe attack of blood pressure followed by a haemorrhage, the girls were shockingly ill with whooping cough, our younger one being hospitalised and the bloodbaths continued in the Punjab and elsewhere. News was appalling. Faiz came and decided to move us nearer to Lahore in case Kashmir was cut off, one could hardly guess at what might happen. We left for Murree while the rest of the family remained in Srinagar. Their tale of hiring the last truck down to the plains and their evacuation is a harrowing one.

Murree was still full of Sikh refugees awaiting transport and a way out. Friends were all anxious to try to arrange for a safe exit for the Sikh families, so we banded together, and somehow buses were arranged to take them all the way to Amritsar. There was a large convoy with as much luggage as could be accommodated. It was a sad and devastating sight for

us all as they boarded the buses in the centre of the town, and bade us farewell. We had done for them what was humanly possible. We gathered on that fateful morning in good spirits, our hopes were high for them all. They all smiled bravely, we touched hands, said all would be well, it was but a short journey to Rawalpindi and there army personnel would join the convoy. We stood watching the last bus trundling down the hill on its way to safety. We went home, not yet at ease.

Before night the news had spread throughout the city. Who does not know the small village of Tret on the way along the Murree-Rawalpindi road? A stream runs the length of the main street, and that day it ran with blood, for tribesmen raced down from the surrounding hills upon the convoy, and all was lost.

One tells the story as part of history now, one's own recollections, one's piecing together of a fabric, a little torn here and there, patched in places, but still whole, with a beauty which has not been lost through the years.

So we, too, later made our way along the same route to a new Lahore, now in a country named Pakistan, to look for a home, where we would spread out our humble belongings, heal wounds, begin a new life, with our children named 'Pakistanis'.

We found this home opposite the Lahore Radio Station, with the Governor as a neighbour at the end of a short road, with Masud Khaddarposh as a another neighbour and the stars and stripes of the US Consulate waving next door.

Strange days came to pass. We lived in a home once occupied by a well-known Lahore doctor, and below us, we looked down from our front balcony into what was his garden, strewn



with the clinic's iron beds, bottles, chairs, syringes, in fact all the contents of what had been one of Lahore's finest private clinics.

Our accommodation was still full of the late occupant's possessions, fleeing in a great hurry. We stacked them away and then spread our belongings. Our parents arrived and the room to the right of the long, wide verandah earned the permanent name of Grandma's room! So our two dear parents stayed until it was time to start on the last lap of their long journey to Africa to meet a son, a daughter-in-law and grandchildren.

No. 41 Empress Road was ours until 1962, when the first long self-exile took us away. The fabric was again torn a little, no patch this time. It was farewell to a much-loved home and to Grandma's room.

## Another Dollar City

Ibrahim Jalees

Lahore. Another dollar city!

A man from a hotel came up to me. "Will you be staying in a hotel, sahib? Come with me. Brand new hotel, Real Pakistani hotel. Best rooms, fine furniture, shower, flush, everything. Excellent arrangement. (This in English). The building was looted from Hindus."

The last detail was probably recounted in order to arouse in me the dormant spark of religious hatred and exploit it for his benefit. I followed him.

I deposited my luggage at the hotel and went over to Radio Pakistan in search of my friend Ibn-e-Insha. There I learned that he was on leave. Already in fever, this news raised my temperature by another degree. On the strange roads of Lahore, I now began to hunt for a dispensary instead of Ibn-e-Insha. After wandering about quite a bit, I saw a signboard "Daily Inqilab." I thought I might find the whereabouts of Ahmed Nadeem Qasimi from here. But not only was the office closed, but the paper itself had been shut down for many days. That drained the last bit of energy out of me and I could hardly walk. Feeling helpless, I sat down on the platform of a closed shop in front of the office. Who would know me here as Ibrahim Jalees? A Pathan, who stood outside the gate of Inqilab, and had been staring at me for some time, came up to me and asked in his typical accent, "Who did you come to meet here?"

I told him I was looking for Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi. The Pathan, obviously educated and respectable, was stoutly built and was dressed in a baggy cotton shalwar and a dark striped

tweed coat. On his head was a starched turban with a rising turrah. He said, "Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi is a famous man. It shouldn't be difficult to find him. I came here to meet Ghulam Rasul Mehr. Come with me, I'll help you to locate Qasmi."

I couldn't even stand up and narrated my unfortunate story. He was duly surprised and said, "Oh, you belong to Hyderabad Deccan? I have lived there in 1944. The people of Hyderabad are good and noble. Don't worry, as long as you don't meet Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi you'll be my guest. Just now I'll take you to a hakim friend of mine. He'll rid you of your fever in a minute."

On this my new benefactor hailed a tonga and took me to his house. There an aged hakim felt my pulse and tapped on my chest, and after making me drink a potion in an earthenware cup, made me lie down on a string bed. In about an hour, I felt as if I was completely well. My benefactor, whose name was Mubarak Shah, then made me get up for breakfast.

After the refreshment this free citizen of the freedom-loving Frontier, whose heart seemed as big as the peaks of the Himalayas, took me in a tonga to a bungalow in Muslim Town. In the verandah sat an old scholarly-looking man smoking a hookah, with piles of books on a table beside him. Maulana Ghulam Rasul Mehr did not know Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi's address, but he didn't disappoint me. He called out to someone in the adjoining bungalow from which emerged Maulana Abdul Majid Salik who told us, "Qasmi lives on Nisbet Road behind Dr. Qavi Luqman's clinic and it is there that he spins his short stories."

We went back. At about four o'clock, I was standing outside the house of the story-spinner, but the man himself was absent. But his sister Hajira Masroor was there and was happy to see

that I had reached Lahore safe and sound. In the meantime, the spinner also turned up. Looking at my haggard appearance, he exclaimed, "What! Ibrahim Jalees?" As if he could not believe that a man with such emaciated features could be Ibrahim Jalees. Of course Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi is as handsome as his heart is beautiful which keeps its doors open even for the commonest stranger. My case is different. I may look like a scarecrow but I am still Ibrahim Jalees.

Hajira and Qasmi Sahib both asked why I was staying at a hotel. "You should have come here straightaway," they said. "This is embarrassing for us."

I replied, "You two are lesser artists than I am. I want to be the guest of someone of my own status. Give me the address of the bungalows of Hameed Akhtar or Ibn-e-Insha." Qasmi Sahib's face lighted up with his typical smile as he answered, "I am sorry I don't know the addresses of these two great writers, but they can be found out. Come with me."

Our tonga trotted for some time over unknown ways, and at last stopped. We were in front of the Paradise Cold Drink Restaurant. On the upper storey hung the signboard of *Savera*, the famous, exquisite and progressive magazine of Chaudhry Nazir Ahmed. Leaving me and Mubarak Shah to eat bread and butter in the Paradise Restaurant, Qasmi Sahib went upstairs to the journal's office and came back after a while. "Found it," he said.

Soon we were standing outside a Chinese pagoda opposite the Odeon Cinema. Qasmi Sahib knocked on the door and a slim, bespectacled Confucius-looking man came out. That was not Confucius, that was Ibn-e-Insha, and the place was not a pagoda



but his house. Qasmi Sahib used to say it was portable and could easily be stolen, or transported anywhere else.

It was a very small house, but for me it was as big as Lahore, for I could live there and find shelter in it. I brought over my things from the hotel. After that my other benefactor, Mubarak Shah, left me at the shop of Sindbad the Tailor at the crossing of Beadon Rod and Macleod Road. I am not likely to come across Mubarak Shah again, but I shall never be able to forget him.

I shall be grateful to you forever, Mubarak Shah!

Goodbye, Mubarak Shah!

After that we went out in search of Hameed Akhtar. In the whole of Lahore Hameed Akhtar is one man who can never be traced. That is, every progressive writer in Lahore complains that it is very easy to know of Hameed Akhtar's address but not so easy to find him. After failing to meet Hameed Akhtar till six o'clock, we returned home after locating his address, because Qasmi Sahib and Hameed Akhtar had to attend the weekly meeting of the Progressive Writers' Association. How fine! The very day I get to Lahore there is the Association's get-together the same day. I didn't want to inflict my non-progressive presence on the meeting, but Qasmi Sahib promised not to introduce me to anyone there.

As we stepped into the YMCA Hall, I stood rooted to the spot, for there was Muhammad Safdar, my friend of Bombay, playing the chairman. In order to escape his notice, I sat crouched behind Qasmi Sahib. Zuhair Siddiqui had just finished reading out his piece on the reactionary aspects of Iqbal's poetry and Agha Shorish Kashmiri was indignantly replying to his

accusations, while I was trying to keep out of sight of Safdar's terrifyingly big eyes. But there was no escape.

After the meeting all the progressive cronies gathered in Ibn-e-Insha's tiny sitting room to look at this reactionary communalist who had fled from the Islamic state of Hyderabad in order to draw breath in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Muhammad Safdar shouted, "O you fascist, you have come here too?" Then the other progressive writers were introduced to me.

This is Ahmed Rahi.  
Here is Nazir Chaudhry.  
And this is Arif Abdul Mateen.

I was feeling quite nonplussed on making their acquaintance, but I managed to say that it was a great pleasure to meet them. At the same time, I was thankful to God that Abdullah Malik was not one of them. The Almighty was probably still considering my expression of thanks when a handsome young man of 25 or 26, in a chocolate-coloured suit, entered the room, and, advancing towards me with his hand held out, and without an introduction, said, "Jalees Sahib, I am Abdullah Malik."

All that I could mutter was "Oh . . . you mean . . .you!"

He added at once, "Yes, I mean Abdullah Malik."

That left me even more nervous, and everybody laughed. My good fortune that soon all the Punjabis began to converse in dialect and I tried to control my nerves by lighting a cigarette.

When everybody had left, and I lay down in my bed after dinner, I asked myself, "Why am I afraid of Abdullah Mailk? What is it about him that makes me nervous? I am better known

as a writer. In the whole of India and Pakistan people respect me more than Abdullah Malik. He's not a patch on me. Its like from the sublime to the ridiculous."

But, at the same time, somebody was saying to me in my heart of hearts, "Abdullah Malik is not the name of an individual. He's a movement. He possesses a balanced and highly developed sense, and all that you have is a sorry pen. He knows mankind. He stands before man, looks deep into his eyes, while you only gaze at his reflection in a hall of mirrors. He is not just Abdullah Malik. He is progressivism itself. And you are not Ibrahim Jalees. You are reaction, regression. He is Jules Fucek, Louis Aragon, Ilya Ehrenburg and Howard Fast, while from inside you are just Baudelaire and Andre Gide. When the chips are down, and the rug is pulled from under the feet, Jules Fucek keeps standing and Andre Gide falls to the ground."

But my ego, my vanity goads me. "Even when you fall you are taller than Abdullah Malik. Never bow your head. It'll be your defeat. Abdullah Malik's steadfastness is not art. Your faltering footstep is art. Literature with an aim is sheer nonsense. Its only art for art's sake that matters. Be careful, never bow your head." And, as usual, I went to sleep in the dark.

Next morning I was still in bed when Ahmed Rahi and Nazir Chaudhry came to see me. The circle of my acquaintance began to widen.

This is the office of the daily *Imroze*. Ayub Ahmed Kirmani is writing the editorial. "Hello Jalees. Thank God you've got here alive. Have a cigarette." I am looking at him with amazement, and I say to him, "Kirmani Sahib, you are the same Ayub Ahmed Kirmani who was captain of the Hockey Eleven in the Osmania University?" He laughed and said, "Come, have

some tea. Are Jigar and the rest of them all right? I say, tell me about Hyderabad. I am missing it badly. Ausaf, Ashfaq, Aaqil, Yusuf, Nazim, Raza, Baqar and the rest of them. Are they all alive or have they been killed?"

It is getting on to evening. I am standing before Paradise Hotel. Ahmed Rahi says, "Meet Qateel Shifai." We fell into each other's arms. My presence has lighted up Qateel's healthy, florid face with the lightning of a smile. With him are Jamil Malik and Hasan Tahir. "Come on. Let's have tea and talk."

India Coffee House is ablaze with noise. The intellectuals of Pakistan are engaged in heated discussions. On one table are Maulana Chiragh Hasan Hasrat, Bari Sahib, Maulana Salahuddin Ahmed, and Shorish Kashmiri. Around another Sher Muhammad Akhtar, Salahuddin Akbar and Ahmed Bashir are having cold coffee. On a corner table Qayyum Nazar, Yusuf Zafar, Riaz Qadir, Mukhtar Siddiqui and Zia Jullundhri are trying to interpret Meeraji's latest poem. Someone, possibly from the CID, is saying, "We can't have India Coffee House in Pakistan. It'll have to be Pakistan Coffee House." Maybe that is why the reputed short story writer Muhammad Hasan Askari is going out of India Coffee House with Chaudhry Rashid Ahmed of Maktaba-e-Jadeed Publishing House.

There is a man standing in front of Bristol Hotel. I ask Ibn-e-Insha, "Is Jan Nisar Akhtar in Lahore?" "No, no," he replies, "This is our own Abid Hashri." We are introduced. Abid Hashri is a great friend of Shaukat Siddiqui, the short story writer from Lucknow. Because of Shaukat Siddiqui the chance encounter is transformed into friendship.

This is the office of Adakar. Ahmed Rahi says, "Let's go and see Qamar. He and I are writing the songs of a new film."



"Which Qaamar?" I ask. "You don't know Qamar? Qamar Ajnalvi."  
"Oh yes, I know him. He also knows me well."

Enter Tanveer Naqvi. Qamar introduces us. Tanveer Naqvi, the famous revolutionary poet of the Indian film industry. He invites us to dinner that evening. I demur. I don't drink. But what's the harm? I am impressed by Tanveer Naqvi and he is impressed by me. Its not only pleasure that one looks for in drink.

Tired after wandering about the whole day, we are poring over old and new journals at Chaudhry Sultan's "Kitabi Duniya." Inside the shop a short and stout young man, something like a British Tommy, is either sitting or lying down. This is Riaz Javed. An unforgiving critic. He has been Maulana Salahuddin Ahmed's side-kick, and is now wallowing in Marxist criticism. Even famous critics quail before him. Let's go for a moment to the office of *Imroze*.

This is the only newspaper populated by youthful, intelligent, progressive writers. Meet Hasan Aarafi. He is as yet unknown, but, mark my words, soon he will be a poet of the people and become the idol of thousands. And meet this young man, he's Hameed Hashmi. You know Anees Hashmi? He's his younger brother. Very useful if you are interested in foreign progressive literature, or if you want anything translated.

The night is half over. I am alone, passing before the girls' hostel of the medical college. There's a cigarette between my fingers but no matches. All the shops are closed. A well-dressed young man is nearing me. He is smoking. I stop him under a lamppost. "May I light my cigarette with yours?" I say, that's Zaheer Babar. "Hello, chain-smoking critic, where are you

coming from at this time of night? And why are you loitering near the girls' hostel?" A smile hovers on Zaheer Babar's handsome face "You are mistaken," he says, "I live in the boys' hostel nearby."

Zaheer Babar threw away a half-smoked cigarette and lighted another.

*Imroze* has published an article of mine. Five columns. Oh, good! Seven rupees per column. Thirty-five rupees! Come on, let's go to the office of *The Pakistan Times* and get the money. We'll meet Faiz Sahib there. Faiz Ahmed Faiz. He's the editor of *The Pakistan Times*. What an attractive personality. An ever-smiling face. Humming thoughts. And yet every feature of the face is articulate. I was so over-awed by Faiz Sahib that I came away promising to meet him again.

I continued to roam the streets of Lahore. Lahore became bigger and bigger. It was no longer a strange city. As it expanded, I saw in one of the faraway streets Hameed Akhtar standing by a fruit-seller's barrow eating a banana. Ahmed Rahi, who is the loudspeaker of the Progressive Writers' Association, shouted, "I say, Ibrahim Jalees, there stands Hameed Akhtar."

I enveloped Hameed Akhtar in my arms. We had lived together in Bombay for a whole year, and then separated as if never to meet again. There was no hope of another encounter, for Punjab had been divided and Hyderabad had been devastated. But we did meet again.

Hameed Akhtar arranged for me to stay with Abdur Rahim, an aristocratic friend of his. In-e-Insha resented this and asked, "Jalees, are you uncomfortable here?"

"No, my dear Ibnash, nothing of the sort. The fact is that I am a scholar gipsy, I don't remain rooted to one spot. What possible discomfort can there be in your house? There are your loving parents who treat me with tender affection as if I am Ibn-e-Insha. Your younger brother, Riaz Ahmed Khan, who insists on talking to me in Punjabi knowing full well that I can't speak your language, and every day brings new kinds of cigarettes for me. Sometimes Gold Flake, sometimes Scissors, sometimes Passing Show and sometimes Red Lamp, and on the excuse of buying a packet for me keeps me informed of the entire range of cigarette brands. But seriously Ibnash, what a large family you have. About a dozen people, and you the sole bread-earner. I don't want to add to your burden. However, if Pakistan had been a land of Ibn-e-Inshas instead of feudals and capitalists, and your father had got the lands here that he lost in East Punjab, or if your department was paying you adequately for your literary efforts, I would have lived with you forever."

"There is another thing too," I added. "Your house reminds me too much of home. When the world comes to life in the morning, the waking-up noises made by your little brothers and sisters, Riaz, Sheedu, Meedu, and Bibo, take my mind back to the noises of Shehryar, Zoya, Lily, Iftikhar and Zubaida and I am smitten with nostalgia. It is as if I wake up in Hyderabad and spend the day in Lahore. The way you, your parents and your brothers and sisters have looked after me, is going to remain unforgettable. How can I ever thank you?"

I moved to Abdur Rahim's house. What a place, a veritable refugee camp! There's Hameed Akhtar who has come from East Punjab, Rashid Hasan has migrated from Lucknow, and I have fled from Hyderabad Deccan. Even our servant Sher Ali is a remnant of the destruction in Kashmir.

There is only one thing the four of us have in common. The pain of living. We brought nothing with us from East Punjab, UP, Hyderabad and Kashmir, except for a frightening past which makes us frustrated with living and the future of the world. Only Hameed Akhtar stands in our midst like a rock. Despite wading through many streams of human blood from Ludhiana to Lahore, he has not lost his mental equilibrium. Unlike us three, he never looks back at the past. His eyes only gaze at the future. He is looking for the coming world and the new man who is to arrive. He says, "The bourgeois system is just the frost, the mist, that is keeping the new world away from our sight. We shall melt this frost, this mist, with the warmth of our eyes, and then we'll be able to see the roofs and cupolas and walls of Moscow. Moscow is not just the capital of the USSR. It is the name of a colony of human beings. It is a symbol."

Sometimes when I am very sad, Nazir Chaudhry pats me on the shoulder and says, "What is this gloom? If you really want to spend your days pleasantly then do it the way Ahmed Rahi does. The fellow is simply living it up."

Then I begin to think seriously about what Nazir has said. Ahmed Rahi is a poet. The whole day long he indulges in hollow laughter on the roads of Lahore, in restaurants and the meetings of progressive writers, as if that is all that writers, poets and artists of the Republic of Pakistan are expected to do; and that they have no other occupation, no other hobby. Or as if Pakistan was created for feudals and capitalists and its doors are closed for artists and workers and ordinary human beings.

Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi has given up his job with Radio Pakistan. Hajira Masroor and Khadija Mastoor have stopped writing radio features. Qateel Shifai has given up his radio contract. The reason is that Radio Pakistan was devoting itself to propaganda for the nawabs and landlords of Pakistan. Abdullah



Malik has relinquished his job in Akhbar-e-Muhajireen and Tufail Ahmed Khan has disassociated himself from the weekly *Istiqal* and daily *Nawa-e-Waqt*, because the two of them felt that feudals and capitalists were hiding behind the pages of these two newspapers.

Then what are progressive writers going to do? How are they to solve the economic problems of their families and their dependents? What are they to live on?

It is said that the government made many lucrative offers to Zaheer Kashmiri, but it could not divert his gaze from the fields and factories. The government run by the feudals and capitalists was not able to buy his gaze and his conscience. It failed to buy his brain, his pen.

Ahmed Rahi is asking Nazir Chaudhry to give him a key to his office so that he can sleep there, for Ahmed Rahi's father has said to him, "If you can't bring any money home, why come home at all?"

Hameed Akhtar's trousers are almost in tatters, and he has no other pair. No money too. He just had two cups of tea in the morning. His lips are parched, but he has kept his embrace around the progressive ideology of life. He is dressed in rags. He hasn't eaten. But his footsteps are steady. There is no shaking him out of his determination.

Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, known for his good clothes, is in a shirt with a frayed collar and has been yearning for a cigarette from somewhere.

Muhammad Safdar has been smoking *biris* made by Kale Khan-M.Hanif and singing in his deep voice the Punjabi verse, "The rocks of the mountains are weeping on hearing our laments."

Ahmed Rahi is always prepared to share the tribulations of his friends. Ahmed Rahi, who turned his body into steel by doing 400 push-ups at a time in Delhi's Karol Bagh and Amritsar's Katra Sant Singh, is a very soft man at heart. He seems to have been born for his friends and lives for his friends, and maybe he'll die for his friends. His own grief doesn't matter where the problems of others are concerned. Thus when he saw the South Indian Ibrahim Jalees shivering in the winter of the Punjab, he took off his pullover and gave it to me. "My friend, put this on," he said.

I demurred, but he said, "Don't feel shy. We are the artists of Pakistan, writers of a bourgeois country. Our time too will come and we'll take revenge on these mighty landlords and capitalists. Today we are shivering in this cold. Tomorrow capitalism, feudalism and imperialism will die of the same cold."

I wore the pullover. Hameed Akhtar said, "There is no need to feel embarrassed. I'll ask Tufail Ahmed Khan today to write an article on the economic condition of progressive writers in a bourgeois democracy."

Everybody laughed. Meantime, Riaz Javed came in and shouted, "Good news! Good news!" We all turned to him. He said, "Congratulations gentlemen. This is to announce that Russian wheat, Russian cloth, Russian soap, Russian oil and Russian cigarettes have arrived in Lahore." This was greeted with exclamations of "Good! Very good news!"

Arif Abdul Mateen interposed, "But do you know that all the big traders of Pakistan have protested strongly against this, because they say that Russian wheat and Russian cloth will promote the spread of communism in Pakistan."

We all burst into laughter, but the news was true and had

also appeared in the newspapers. Ahmed Rahi was very happy and said, "Well. Now I shall have a suit of Russian cloth stitched, and after washing my face with Russian soap and eating bread made out of Russian wheat, I'll walk into Volga Restaurant and in future sit there, smoking a Russian cigarette. Goodbye to Paradise Restaurant!"

Safdar retorted, "You cannot leave Paradise Restaurant, for where else can you go? All your private letters come to that address."

A broad smile breaks out on Ahmed Rahi's rugged features as if a canal had sprouted from rocky land. But Nazir Chaudhry has started a quarrel with Safdar. There is every possibility of it becoming acrimonious, but suddenly Zaheer Kashmiri walks in and everybody is quiet. The progressive poet oozes from his golden locks and ruddy face, his hooked nose and Shakespeare-like beard and his dark blue suit with white stripes, and he declaims in a thundering voice:

"Communes are coming up today in every corner of  
Telangana land,

"The breeze of life is flowing today in its dust-laden  
existence,

"Today the Telangana man is waving the colours of  
love's victory,

"Today the Telangana man is announcing the revival  
of the East,

"Today the Telangana man is connecting Bidar with  
Greece and Java."

Tea arrives. A proposal is presented that a group photograph of progressive writers be arranged which should not only show their faces but also depict their economic plight. This group photo should be inserted into Pakistan's political history. But Ahmed Rahi suggests that Zaheer Kashmiri's picture should be separate from the group, in an inset.

Ibn-e-Insha makes an amendment. "It should be like this. The pictures of Zaheer Kashmiri and William Shakespeare should be printed on the same page, with the caption: 'Let us see towards which flame the moth goes.'"

But Ahmed Rahi continues, "No camera can portray Zaheer Kashmiri properly, because I know for a fact that Pakistan does not have cameras that can make technicolour portraits."

In a rage, Zaheer Kashmiri pounces on Rahi in his best rhetoric. "In this mortal world it is long since beauteous good sense took leave of Ahmed Rahi in the dark of night. That is why, obsessed with his limited sight, and waiting futilely for the inspiring light of the morning, he confuses the negative with the positive and, in interminable accents, goes on spouting sheer nonsense every moment of the day." And, in order to change the mood of the gathering, he begins to recite his latest poem.

As the poem ends, the daily informal gathering of the Progressive writers also concludes. Coming out, I light a cigarette and begin to think. Where am I to go? Did Zaheer Kashmiri speak the truth, that there is no other lunatic asylum but this life?

I stand alone. No, I'm not alone. There is my beloved with me—hunger. Hunger which is the lifeblood of Pakistan. Nowadays



I am entrapped in her love. I have just six annas in my pocket. When everybody is gone I proceed stealthily to a man selling kababs on the pavement of the Macleod Road crossing and buy two kababs and two naans from him. Rolling these up in an old newspaper, I go to a friend's house and there I quietly eat my meal and thank God that no one has seen me. Then I go public and stroll on the Mall smoking a cigarette as if I have just had dinner in Stiffles or Metro. Whereas the fact is that Falettis and Lorangs and Stiffles and Metro are located far away from Pakistan. The common man of this country can't reach them. How many rupees separate the people's Pakistan from Metro's Pakistan? I don't know.

But in the first days of the month when Ayub Ahmed Kirmani gets his five hundred rupees we do spend some evenings in Metro Pakistan too. Metro Pakistan is completely different from Hira Mandi Pakistan and Shahalmi Pakistan. Everything in Metro Pakistan is different — the population, the culture, the politics and even the climate. When I step into Metro Pakistan, I feel an inferiority complex overcoming me because my only coat is frayed at the elbows and the crease of my trousers disappeared long ago. Otherwise too, I look more like a coolie of the Nizam State Railway or a snake-charmer from the Vindhyachal mountains, or an Indian secret agent.

Metro Pakistan is a very romantic place. When you come out of Shahalmi Gate or from the narrow, twisting and stinking alleys of Abdullah Malik's Koocha Chabuk Sawaran and suddenly enter Metro Pakistan you feel as if you have emerged from the war-battered ruins of China's Nanking city that you see in news-reels and have reached Rainbow Island in the company of Dorothy Lamour.

In Metro Pakistan you see the women of Islam in colourful

clothes dancing with their boy friends, breast to breast, and even lips to lips, while in Shahalmi Pakistan a frenzied Muslim may be out with a pair of scissors ready to snip off the plaits of young girls not in purdah. That is why you don't see any women in Shahalmi nowadays, only burqas. And yet, in crowded Anarkali Bazaar when sometimes a fairy face lifts the veil of her burqa to look at something, it is as if the Kaaba has been illumined by celestial light.

The dance of wealth goes on. Wine-glasses are tinkling, and, on the floor of Metro Pakistan, feudalism and capitalism, drunk in each other's arms, are pirouetting like in a cabaret. It looks as if they will stumble, fall . . .

Ha ha ha!  
Beer and gin!  
Gin and whisky!  
Whisky!

Ha ha ha! Come on Kirmani, let's get out. This Metro Pakistan is not for us. Everything here is a fraud. Look! The blood of seventy million humans is being poured into wine-glasses. The wide expanse of life has been contracted in this narrow place for a few persons, while outside, darkness and death have been made the fate of thousands upon thousands. Hold me tight. My head is whirling. I can hardly breathe. The glare of lights from London and New York is blinding my eyes. My sight is dying, my heart is dying. I am falling. I am about to die. Take me out of here. And tell me how far I am from the people's Pakistan. How far?

When the British rule ended, and India and Pakistan became free and sovereign, Mir Osman Ali Khan, the Nizam of Hyderabad, then reputedly the richest man in the world, decided that he would accede to neither of the two dominions. Accordingly he declared

his independence, although the landlocked state of Hyderabad was populated overwhelmingly by Hindus who wanted to be part of the new India. Legally he was entitled to do so, but in the modern world you cannot ignore the wishes of 15 million of your Hindu subjects just because you are a Muslim yourself.

On the other hand, his Muslim subjects were jubilant and bent upon protecting and preserving the Osmania state which they characterised as "Southern Pakistan." However, this was not to be, and India overran Hyderabad after a few months. In this crisis, Ibrahim Jalees, a staunch supporter of the state's Muslim culture, had to flee, and was assisted by his communist friends in somehow getting to Bombay. After staying there in hiding for some time, he bought a "permit" for Pakistan and flew by air to Karachi. After being homeless and aimless in Karachi, Jalees caught a train to Lahore to be among his friends in the Progressive Writers' Association. This is a sentimental account of his encounter with them and with the city of Lahore, and graphically captures the atmosphere of 1947-48.

(Translated from Urdu)

## **The Wagah Canal**

### **Fikr Taunsvi**

Wagah.... It is neither located on a plateau nor on a river bank. Neither does it produce cotton to be sent to Vassawar. Nor is it a port for which the British and the French fought for years. Wagah is a plain and simple canal—silent, gentle and calm. It watered the fields before the formation of India and Pakistan and breathed life into swaying fields of corn. But the moment the bugles were blown to herald Independence, it seemed as if the Wagah canal had turned into an arid wasteland. Instead of milky-white cascading waters, the troops were stationed there. Guns, cannons and armoured cars brought news of freedom to Wagah and relieved the canal of the burden of cultivating the fields. Henceforth, the fields around Wagah canal were not to wait for the streamlets carrying life-giving nectar. Instead, they were to get used to the weight of cannons and armoured cars. The fields, in any case, were not servile to either the canal or its glistening sweet water. Nor were they bonded to the farmer who ploughed them or to the ears of corn that swayed over them. They were, in reality, only a few pieces of dry land. And land either belongs to God or the King. No one else has any claim over it. And the King, the deputy of God on this earth, can dispose of it any time and anyway he likes. If he so wills, he can destroy the ears of corn and replace them with guns and bullets. He can change the face of the earth. He can turn a jungle into a flourishing country and then divide it into two and call one Mangal (Mars) and the other Sanichar (Saturn). Having done that he can proclaim before the whole world to the beat of drums that Mangal is Mangal and Sanichar is Sanichar. That is why the twain will not be allowed to meet....

And then to emphasise the divide between the two, huge signboards were installed. Colourful flags were hoisted, a green



one on this side and a red on the other. Now they had separate names.

‘Wagah ki Nehar’ from *Satvan Shastra*, pp. 57-66.

Separate flags, separate uniforms and separate cannons. That is how the world came to know that the canal which watered the fields, both on the east and west, would now be used to divide east from west, and henceforth historians would call it Wagah.

I could have easily called Wagah, the border between India and Pakistan, but I feared—and I had solid and valid reasons for my apprehensions—that all the leading historians and geographers would have immediately censured me for doing that because, for them the old concept, according to which there used to be only one border between the two countries, had now become redundant. Moreover, a few astrologers in 1947 made the heavenly bodies revolve in such a scientific manner that instead of having one border between them, India and Pakistan had two. Actually the word ‘two’ had befuddled their minds in such a way that now neither the stars moved in an orderly manner nor did their predictions come true. Exasperated by this very ‘two’ and swayed by their animosity to ‘one’ they became oblivious of the fact that the new unit they were trying to create was by itself a derivative of ‘one’.

Consequently, you may be exasperated or annoyed, but I can’t deny the two borders between India and Pakistan. One is Wagah and the other.... But what have I to do with the other one? I only want to convey a few things about Wagah crossed by over ninety lakh people during the last few days in the name of safeguarding their religions. I chanced to cross the border three times during the last few days.

The first time my status was of a regular citizen, i.e. I entered the territory of India as a regular refugee, riding a regular army truck, and with proper pomp and show. I say 'pomp and show' because our grand caravan, consisting of trucks, was given a grand reception of a fluttering red and yellow flag, an extensive army camp approbation and applause, and slogans shouted by the refugees themselves. The first thing I did was to try and search for that dividing line. To define it, the pages of the Quran, the Vedas and the Granth Sahib had to be reinterpreted so as to bring out altogether different meanings from what they actually stood for. On this the Prime Minister of Great Britain said: 'It is not merely a line. On the contrary, it is a sacred link which will strengthen the bond of friendship between India and Pakistan.' Consequently I was disappointed when I looked for that strong bond. There was no formidable mountain, sea, river or jungle on the border. But almost immediately I repented having thought so foolishly, because having a river, a sea or a mountain for a border was a concept associated with the Stone Age. Man was afraid of man then, one state was against the other, and the borders existed as defence barriers against the enemy. Wars were fought to vanquish adversaries and gain dignity and honour. As far as I could understand, there was no earthly reason for India and Pakistan to be enemies. Whenever the elites of the two countries met, they embraced one another like brothers. That the commoners of the two countries always pounced on one another like hungry wolves was an altogether different matter. The downtrodden people are by nature wolves, eternally hungry and bloodthirsty. Why should anyone raise walls for the sake of people like that? Actually the real cause of a war was the clash of interests between the elites. Otherwise, how else can one explain that when the commoners are virtually tearing each other apart like wolves, the elites, overflowing with love and affection for each other, sit together in cosy comfort over tea, rub their snouts with each other like goats, and work out how

to bear the crushing burden of the extra millions raked in as profit under the new industrial policy.

I was shocked to see the border guards of both countries indulging in idle gossip-mongering outside their camps. I felt like shouting at them and telling them: 'Aye soldiers! What's the use of posting you here? Don't you know you are there to strike terror in the heart of the enemy? And here you indulge in meaningless chatter, as if you have been trained since childhood just to do that! How comfortable you look playing cards, as if you were born masters.'

But before I could learn more about the Wagah border, our caravan set out on the road to India, the land of paradise. My desires remain unfulfilled.

The next time I went to Wagah on a lorry from Amritsar. This one too, like other lorries, collected a fixed fare from the passengers and took them to the border. The passengers were either Hindus or Sikhs. Almost all were traders. All of them cursed Pakistan during the journey. I got angry several times. One person deliberately picked a quarrel with me when he heard me say that I was going to Wagah to meet Ahmad Nadim Qasmi, a Muslim friend of mine. When I asked him: 'Are you going to Wagah to sell the bundles of Kashmiri cloth to your Muslim friends?' he told me truthfully that the merchant in question was no friend of his. He was just a merchant. And as far as he was concerned there was not even a remote connection between trade and friendship.

This time, I was shocked to see the way the two governments functioned. There was no sign of the Wagah Canal on the border. Nor did I see the flags or the soldiers. There was just a three-mile long sea of people who had swallowed up the

marks which demarcated one country from the other. This sea was pulsating with the same people, who until only a year ago were enemies. Now, they could be seen sitting together under the shade of the trees having a friendly chat, sharing a sliced melon, enjoying a joke, guffawing and hugging one another. A man donning a Turkish cap was slicing a mango and offered pieces of it to a Sikh. A Muslim woman had brought home-made keema-parathas and was laughing and affectionately feeding a dhoti-clad gentleman. Thousands were crossing the border at will without fear of being stopped. I really felt sorry for the way the two governments functioned. What could be more absurd than this: that these thousands of people seemed to have absolutely no feeling and regard for the dignity and honour of their respective governments! They hardly remembered that only a few months ago they did not carry melons, mangoes and keema-parathas for one another. Instead, they had daggers, swords and bombs to destroy one another. I wondered how the intensely violent religious hatred in their hearts had subsided. I wished to God they had the sense to keep their religious feelings alive for a few more days so that their respective governments could prove to the world that they were two different people prepared to destroy each other! But that had not happened. Yesterday's enemies were sitting together recounting their tales of woe. The tales of ransacked homes. Tales of how their women were dishonoured, how their flourishing businesses collapsed, how their homes were set on fire, how their children got separated from their mothers and the wives from their husbands. All these tales were shocking and full of anguish. They brought tears of sympathy to every listener and carried with them a faint glimmer of hope that one day they might go back to their homes and live together once more. Now, those tales had no meaning. At the most they could provide raw material to the future historians. And there was also the possibility that future historians might refuse to include them in histories because they had more melons,



mangoes and keema-parathas in them than daggers and swords. Such non-political aspects had no place in history books.

The history of Wagah of those days is absurd because it was against the basic ideology of a government, and encouraged disloyalty towards the government. And the truth was that the downtrodden people have always rebelled against the ruling classes and betrayed their trust in them. That was why I felt like descending on their camps and giving them a piece of my mind: 'Gentlemen! Stop this cursed friendly intercourse between these people. Otherwise, if people keep meeting one another like this, they might begin to understand the reality and all that has been achieved so far would go down the drain.'

The most interesting feature of the Wagah border were the shops set up for the organised sale of religion. A bearded Maulvi sat there with a huge pile of books, including the Vedas, Shastras, Granthas, Geetas and Upanishads and many more works in Hindi and Sanskrit. Sitting next to him was a Sardarji who sold copies of the Quran Majeed, Fiqh, Hadith and dozens of other writings in Arabic. All those books were a part of the loot which the two gentlemen had brought to sell. Otherwise, they would have been at each other's throats by now. But at Wagah they were selling their books peacefully, the Maulvi selling the Hindu scriptures and the Sikh works on Muslim theology. Privately they thought that once the books were sold, they would sit back and live comfortably for at least a few months. If by selling religion one could have two square meals every day, what could be better?

Next, I met the writers. They were Muslims. They had come to Wagah from Pakistan. Their group consisted of Sahir Ludhianvi, Ahmad Nadim Qasmi, Ahmed Rahi, Abdul Matin Arif, Ibne Insha, Barkat Ali Chowdhury and Salahuddin Akbar. We

just rushed and hugged one another. The earth under our feet did not shake with this. Nor did it protest that the earth which the Hindu and Muslim writers trod was either a part of India or Pakistan. As such it should have cried out in protest against the aliens treading on its bosom. But it remained quiet. How dumb this earth was! Actually, we were totally oblivious of the religion of the soil, stones, straw and grass underneath our feet, though we ought to have been more aware. In fact, if we had made these mute elements conscious of the greatness of their religion and their regional cultures, there was every chance of their revolting against us!

Anyway, we writers were not bothered about the protest or lack of it. Ours was a meeting of writers. So we poked fun at one another's writing and enjoyed kababs, korma, rice and tea at an exclusively Muslim hotel. We almost forgot that we were sitting at a place called Wagah which divides Pakistan from India. We laughed at the folly of those thousands who wanted to forge an intimate relationship between the two dominions. Then, we informed one another about the major achievements of our respective governments so that we could convey the information to them and thus perform the literary duties of fifth columnists. All sorts of suggestions were mooted to strengthen each other's governments, so that they could join hands to wage war against the half-naked and the semi-starving masses and suppress them. A couple of writers suggested they should raise a wall of tigers on one bank, and a wall of elephants on the other bank of the Wagah border so that people who regularly sat on either side and devoured melons and mangoes should learn to stay put in their own homes.

Anyway, we noted these absurd and impracticable suggestions and dispersed. The evening was drawing near and

the military post on the border had sounded their bugles, warning people to return home. Gradually, the dividing line at Wagah emerged more clearly. We suddenly realised it was time to part, and walked to the border together. Neem trees were lined on one side of the Grand Trunk Road. One stood bang on the border, almost as if it were a communist, otherwise it might have easily grown a little away, on either side. How boldly it stood there, as if no one could touch it! Had this been reported to the authorities of either country, the tree would have been surely felled. But why do that? Why not divide the leaves and branches equally between India and Pakistan? Why not tell the tree which of its branches and its leaves are Hindu or Muslim?

Sahir said to me: 'Why bother about this tree? Come let us go to Lahore.' And then all the Hindu writers went over to the other side of Wagah to the enemy country.

No one knows which politician forwarded the suggestions we had aired at Wagah just to have some fun at the expense of the lawmakers in both countries. When I went to Wagah for the third time, I was glad to see that the hallmarks, signs and symbols that distinguish one country from the other were in place. There was no trace of melons, mangoes and keema-parathas. Silence and desolation prevailed. All those guffaws, echoes of laughter, those tears and tales of woe had retreated to where they belonged. Their place was taken by tigers and elephants. Realising the special importance of Wagah canal and fearing that this 'beauty' would become world famous and start attracting hordes of lovers from all over, it was hidden from their prying and unwelcome eyes. About half a mile away on this side of the border a lion spotted me and gave me a look which seemed to say: 'Sir, your daily incursions have made the border an object of ridicule. Don't you know, the border came into existence after long and serious deliberations? You should

know the difference between taking this fact seriously and mocking at it.'

Following this, I and many other fun-loving people like me raised their heads and fluttering their eyelids attempted to catch a glimpse of the Wagah canal. But we could see nothing except army camps and the outlines of some familiar sights. One of the tigers told me that half a mile away, to the west of Wagah canal, an elephant was an expert in constitutional and international law. He prevented people from crossing over and informed them that the outmoded and uncivilised way of friendly social intercourse among people belonging to different countries was prohibited. Now, only regular passport-holders could touch the 'Wagah beauty'. The government had to be convinced that the person claiming to be a lover was 'genuine' and that he was not a threat to the security of the 'beauty'.

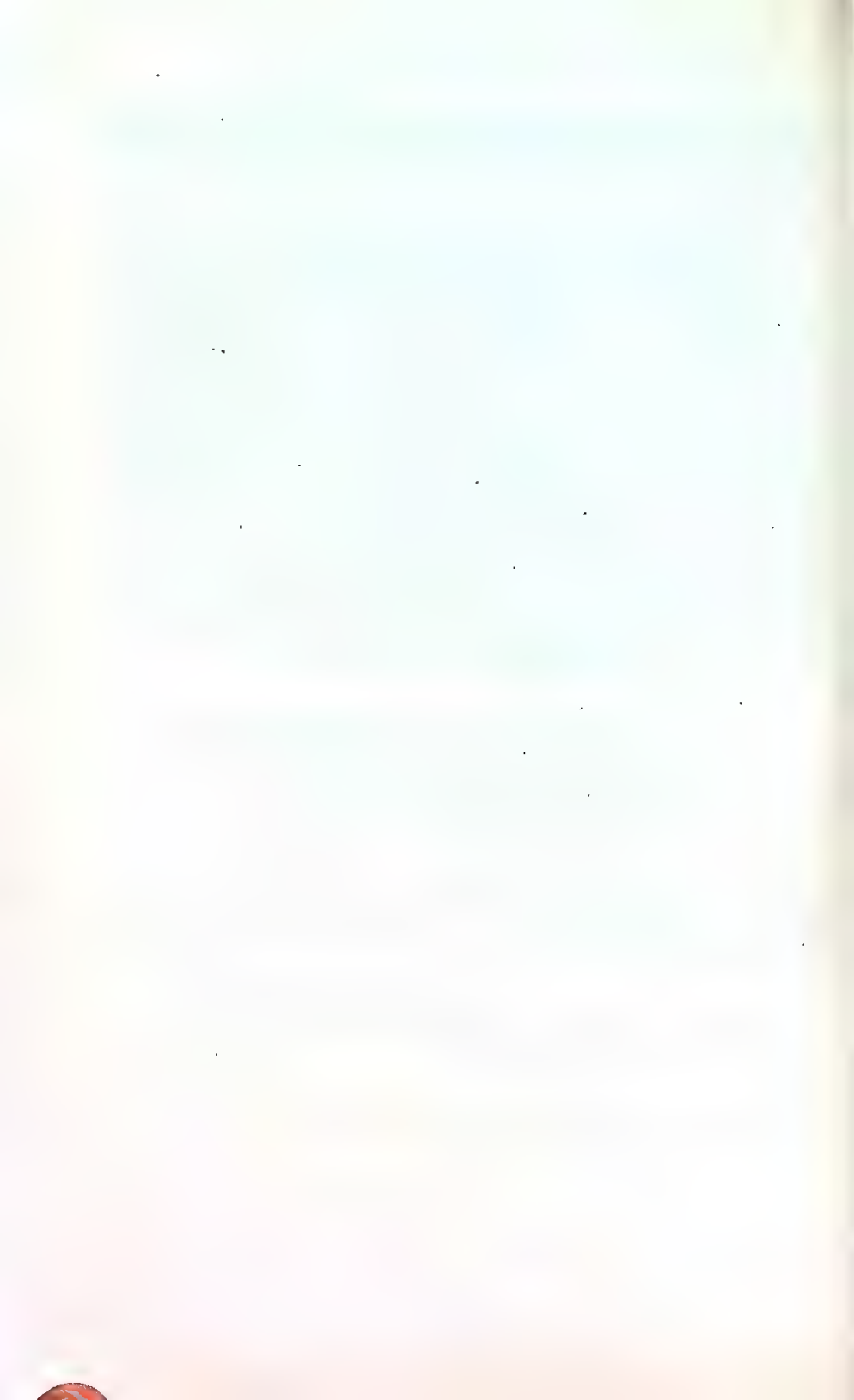
I quietly took the army sentinel aside and asked: 'Well sir, a tree stood on the bank of Wagah canal. Can you tell me whether it has been felled and thrown away or. . . ?'

The sentry pointed his bayonet at me and staring at me said: 'Who are you to interfere in this business which concerns the two governments?'

And in the core of my heart I said: 'Listen good man, after all I am a branch of the same tree.'

(Translated from Urdu by A.S. Judge and Mushirul Hasan)





## ***Two***



# Lahore 1947

B.C. Sanyal

## Pre-Partition Agonies

The World War came to an end and the war at home began. We began to hear slogans about the rights of the linguistic and religious minorities. The dreadful consequences of the partition of the country could not even be dreamed but the air was rife with conjectures about the great divide. From my studio window agitated processions were seen one after another. A temper of violence was generating like a subterranean rumbling. The shape of things to come was yet diffused, but the fate of this city was the focus of discussion. The city of Lahore, enriched by the wealth and cultural heritage of the Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims, the destiny of this city of stout heart became the burning question on every mind. Census and assessment of population and property had begun. Hindus had made large investments in educational, medical, industrial and religious institutions. Sikhs and Muslims had deep ties of history and indelible sentiments wrapped in the din and dust of the city. What would be the fate of the different communities in the hands of the arbiters? It was no longer an imaginary fear but conceivable possibilities of a reality.

There was a perceptible increase in the number of sword-carrying Akalis in the town. The landlord of the Regal Cinema building being a Hindu, had employed a couple of hefty sardars with naked swords in their hands to keep watch over his property. We made good use of them as models in my studio.

In the midst of this agitational atmosphere, the public of Jat-dominated Rohtak, then a district headquarter of Punjab, decided to erect a statue of Sir Chhotu Ram. Chhotu Ram certainly



deserved the honour and I needed the commission to execute the bronze statue. The memorial committee invited me to come to Rohtak and sign the agreement. The secretary of the committee, Chaudhry Kedar Singh, was a tough and shrewd negotiator, and he sensed my desperation in getting some work in hand and I gave in to his terms.

Lahore was hot in every respect. The summer in June with its dust storms and the dust raised by the political contest was hardly agreeable for concentration on serious work. So, my good and friendly pupils decided for me that I proceed to Kashmir. Chaudhry and Sir Chhotu Ram could wait till I returned refreshed. I, with my family of two and Hamida Begum, boarded a bus to Srinagar. Finally, we pitched our tents on the Pahalgam plateaux, at my favourite site. It was here, with Hamida's joyous assistance that we celebrated the first birthday of our daughter in August 1946.

But our joy was short-lived as Hamida brought ominous news from the Kashmiri hotels in the bazaar that Hindu-Muslim riots were imminent. We read about the dreadful communal killings in Calcutta. Hamida's anxiety infected us as it infected the rest of the holiday crowd on the plateaux, irrespective of caste and community. We organised a meeting of the tent-dwellers in the manner of a social get-together to relieve tension. Kashmir, a Hindu state with a majority of Muslim subjects, could easily become a danger spot in the current atmosphere. In fact, the cordiality enjoyed between us, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians, was beginning to show the strain of the ugly riot news. At the meeting, controversial statements were made and questions raised. An air of gloom descended upon us. At the time in a holiday mood, I had stopped shaving and sported stubble on my chin. To make light of the developing heavy air at the meeting, I suggested that one way of lowering communal

tension could be by sporting beards like mine by the Hindus and cultivating *bothis*—the tuft of hair—by our Muslim friends as a gesture of communal goodwill.

My proposal was greeted with laughter and applause, and people relaxed. But an act of indiscretion on the part of the tehsildar—a Kashmiri Pandit—whom we had invited to tea at the meeting, vitiated the atmosphere. Normally, the Kashmiri Pandits are above the narrowness of social or caste behaviour, but our tehsildar guest rather ostentatiously chose to sit apart from our Muslim friends to sip his cup of tea. This was taken as an affront and tempers began to run high.

We returned to Lahore. The press was full of exaggerated news and views, truths and half-truths about the Calcutta riots. One could read between the lines about the shape of things to come. Our ayah Hamida Begum left us. I shaved off my beard.

In this disturbed state of mind, I kept postponing my work on the Chhotu Ram statue. Endless processions and shouting of slogans became the routine of life. We heard that India's independence was imminent, but at the cost of political amputation of the country. We also heard about the appointment of the Radcliffe Commission and that the Punjab was to be partitioned into the East and West. No one knew yet which side would win the trophy. Justice Bakshi Tekchand, Sri Gokul Chand Narang and other prominent Hindus issued statements justifying the inclusion of Lahore in the East. Affluent people and men of means had already begun negotiations for transfer of property, exchange of assets and withdrawal of bank accounts. All my assets were what I had in my studio and other household effects.

Stabbing, killing and burning had begun in restricted areas in Lahore. One evening, some friends had gathered at Khushwant Singh's house. Khushwant was then practising law,

and his wife and he were good hosts. My wife and I also happened to call on them. G. D. Khosla and Azim Husain, both in the Indian Civil Service, and Manzoor Qader, a barrister-at-law, were present. The conversation inevitably turned to what individual decision was contemplated in the event of the declaration of Pakistan and India as two different entities. Those who were in government service had to opt for one or the other, and naturally, religious sentiment was to be the rationale of the choice, since the idea of Pakistan had been mooted on the basis of religion. Azim Husain said he would throw in his lot on the side of secular India. For me, it was not a question of secularism or theocracy, but the place I had learnt to love in two decades—through work, play and friendship. It was Lahore that mattered.

I sought counsel with P. N. Thapar who was then the commissioner of the division. He was interested in the arts, and I was pleased to make his acquaintance. Thapar's friendly advice to me was that during the disturbed period it would be better for me to be away. Since, however, I had a wide circle of friends among Muslims—officials and intellectuals—there should not be any need to uproot myself from here. Reasonable advice, I thought. Simultaneously, Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders proclaimed that it would not do to be panicky, that no harm would come to anyone. Stay where you are and carry on with your normal life. But in the face of the administration breaking down, arson and loot occurring unabated, the populace turned cynical and could not rely on the sermons delivered by the leaders.

As the days passed, I saw from my residence on McLeod Road, streams of people heading towards the railway station, situated at the far end of the road. Occurrences of stabbing and attacks by mobs on mohallas inhabited by one community or the other were reported. I was living in the midst of a mixed

residential area, Quilla Gujar Singh of the Sikhs one side, Hindu havelis in the middle, and at the back predominantly Muslim locality. At midnight we would wake up, aroused by the terrifying shout of 'Hara Hara Mahadeo', 'Sat Shri Akal' and 'Allah ho Akbar', emanating from different directions.

It would appear as if my area of residence was the target of attack and meeting ground for the three communal brigades of miscreants.

The rulers had taken resort to curfew and shooting, being unable to control the mobs, or were not just concerned about the carnage that was unleashed. The Dogra Regiment was withdrawn and replaced by the Baluch.

We saw flames rising from the Shahalim section of the walled city inhabited largely by Hindus. The inmates of the burning houses ran out to face the bullets of the Baluch Regiment for infringement of curfew regulations!

Night after night we kept awake, anticipating trouble, till it was rumoured that our turn would be the next. My next-door neighbour were Dr. S. N. Kaul, the well-known eye-surgeon, and his barrister brother. The barrister took the initiative to organise the neighbours to keep watch by turn. My house being adjacent to the entrance gate of the Khanna Haveli, it was decided that the terrace of the house would be the most strategic place to mount watch from. When my turn came, barrister Kaul handed over his gun to me. Long past midnight, the familiar cry by now was heard, but I could not help feeling amused as it suddenly dawned upon me that I had never learnt how to pull the trigger. The mob was sporting enough not to attack that night.

Stories of unprecedented violence spread like wildfire. Two



of my oldest Bengali acquaintances in Lahore were murdered. One was Sarkar of the police service and the other was the priest of the Kali Bari, a giant of a man. Rumour was at its height that Lahore was given to West Pakistan by the Radcliffe Award. At this, the Hindu and Sikh population was obsessed with the fear that in Islamic Pakistan there would be no place for them. The baser element of the other community became quite active in grabbing what they could and looted the properties of non-Muslims.

In the meantime, reaction had stimulated ghastly reprisals in Amritsar, Patiala and other places of the East Punjab, with the result that a large number of Muslims began escaping to Lahore. At such a time of anxiety and indecision, one day at the dead of night a friend of ours, Mrs. Sarin, knocked at our door and held out two air tickets to Delhi. She said, "Shahalin is burning to ashes, we cannot leave till we have some news of our relatives living there. I have the car and the driver and curfew passes with me. Go to the Walton airfield immediately. There is no time to lose."

In a few minutes, we left for Walton. It was decided that I would put Snehalata and the child in the plane and return. At the airport, Snehalata argued that since we had two tickets, we should both leave for the time being. So, I also boarded the plane as I was. Snehalata's parents were in Delhi and were happy to see us, but I returned to Lahore the day after.

The situation worsened every day. There were more passengers than the railways could cope with the two-way traffic of uprooted people. It was difficult now to meet friends. No one to talk to, seek counsel or sympathise with. I managed to reach my studio and stay there for a while. During these disturbed

times, I painted a canvas depicting the horrors of communal riots, of man killing man. The painting was exhibited at Calcutta at the Academy of Fine Arts' annual exhibition, but it was removed, I was told, at the behest of Husain Shaheed Suhrawardy, who was then the Chief Minister of undivided Bengal.

Word went round soon that the railway traffic between Lahore and Delhi might be discontinued as passengers of both communities were butchered on the way.

### **Delhi's Bloodbath**

Snehalata arrived before the week was over. The child was safely left in the care of her parents in Delhi. For us the moment had come for the momentous decision. Either we both stayed on, come what may, or we both quit. Even Muslim comrades thought it would be wise to stay away till the dust settled, and we should leave by train which might be the last train from Lahore for Delhi. We left. Before leaving, we hastily packed two trunks with silk saris and warm clothes and left them with Dr. Charles Fabri at the Museum. He was then the curator. There was no time to make any other arrangement; besides, the idea of returning was very much there at the back of our minds. I had locked the studio earlier with years of my work in it, and now locked the doors of my home which we had so lovingly set up, and handed over the keys to comrade Karimullah at the commune.

It was a repetition of what we thought we had left behind, beyond the Wagha border, when we arrived in Delhi. I was staying at Havelock Square, where each Punjabi home was overflowing with uprooted relatives from the West Punjab. There was gloom, sadness and bitter complaints everywhere. I felt I had come from one cursed city to another. The same atrocities, killing, looting and burning were going on, only the venue and the

perpetrators were different. From Havelock Square the Birla Mandir, a distance of a few furlongs, I saw dead and half-dead bodies lying on the roadside. Some sadists had built up a fire around a body still breathing. A primitive desire for revenge was writ large on the faces of some young Sikh boys I saw, who must have lost all, including their dear and near ones and arrived as destitutes. Hindu chauvinists were freely proclaiming, "Hindustan for Hindus."

The Muslim population concentrated in certain areas were also well-organised and equipped with guns and other weapons. The destination for them was either Pakistan, or kill a Kafir and go to Behist. Dr Joshi fell a victim in their hands at Paharganj.

Small police forces could be seen looking on helplessly. Gandhiji was grief-stricken, Maulana Azad sad and remorseful, Jawaharlal upset and angry. Eventually, riot-control was handed over to the army. Most of the soldiers were from down South. The authorities decided that the Muslim population desirous of crossing over to Pakistan should be escorted and given protection. Transit camps were set up at Idgah, Purana Quila and at Humayun's Tomb. It was a heart-wrenching sight at Daryagunj to watch the long procession of men, women and children with bundles on their heads and under their arms, dragging their feet under military protection, towards the transit camps.

They were mostly from the poorer section of the Muslim populace, leaving their hearths and homes. Even so, they were pounced upon, unnoticed by the military guards and dragged into the side lanes by refugee youngsters who then robbed them.

I saw the nauseating sight of truckloads of rotting dead bodies taken away for mass burial.

Is this the civilisation humanity is proud of? And where are the culture and progress we are never tired of talking about?

Even before the deadline of the declaration of independent sovereign Pakistan, momentum had gathered in the voluntary exchange of population. Now it was undertaken under the aegis of the government. The basic cruelty of mankind was manifested in the butchering of train-loads of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims while in transit from one side to the other. The only silver lining to the clouds was the knowledge from my personal experience and from what I heard, that there were a few people among Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims who were not blinded by communal hatred and risked everything to save some fellow human beings.

The stage came when the movements of trains were not disclosed and the public was forbidden entry to stations. Soon after, railway communication was totally disrupted.

Who was responsible for this man-made catastrophe and what forces had brought about the colossal disaster and suffering? The question still remains unanswered.

Bewildered and dazed, I remained in a kind of animated suspension. Had I really arrived at the point of no return to my home and studio?

At Kingsway in Old Delhi, a large camp was established to receive refugees from the Sind, NWFP and the West Punjab, with a view to helping them in their rehabilitation. Snehalata volunteered her services to work for the camp. But what about our own rehabilitation? We had not yet registered ourselves as refugees. The idea of becoming a refugee in your own motherland was still repugnant.



Not far from Havelock Square, Gandhiji was camping in the Harijan Colony. With him was Abdul Gaffar Khan, also camping there. I began attending Gandhiji's evening prayer meetings. Day after day, I heard him appeal to Indians irrespective of caste and creed to shed their communal outlook and become human and compassionate. It sounded more like the wailing of an agonised soul than someone delivering sermons.

I began sketching at the prayer meetings and asked his secretary for permission to sketch Gandhiji from life, outside the meeting hours. He told me a day later that I could do so when Gandhiji would be resting. I went prepared with my sketchbook and saw him seated with writing material in hand. Hardly had I begun when he looked at me and like a naughty boy he stretched himself and turned his face away.

### August 15

News reached us that Amritsar and beyond had been devastated by rainstorm and flood, and all communications had been practically cut off.

Then came August 15. In the afternoon I witnessed the unimaginable sight of Lord Mountbatten in the horse-drawn carriage, proceeding towards the Parliament House in a procession of glitter and gold liveries. Unlike any representative of the British Empire of yesterday, he was bending down with stretched arms to shake the extended hands of Indians, most of them, I was sure, were the uprooted natives of India that was; now called refugees of nameless, faceless, anonymity.

At midnight, I heard Nehru's famous speech about his tryst with destiny.



I acknowledged the reality of the accomplished fact that Hindustan and Pakistan were two different countries, but did not find anything in it to revive my spirits.

It was now impossible, however, to leave everything to fate and remain inactive. The stark realities of life were staring us in the face. Accommodation, employment, earning and the rest of it, were all of the same priority. It is true we found immediate shelter at Havelock Square, but it could never be the final solution. To start life all over again from scratch, with a brush in hand, seemed a tremendously uphill task. At the approach of winter, I desperately thought of means to recover at least our warm clothes left behind in Lahore.

As if my silent thought was transmitted across the border, I heard from Fabri that things were now normal in Lahore. He further added, "Come back, your friends are waiting with open arms to receive you".

Comrade Karimullah also wrote to say that we were very fortunate that though many houses of the evacuees were looted and emptied, no one had touched the lock of our home.

He added, however, that he had allowed a Muslim refugee family from UP to occupy the upper storey of the house, which consisted of the terrace-kitchen and the storeroom.

I was impatient to reach Lahore, but how? I took the plane from Safdarjung airport to Amritsar. Luckily, I met the sister of one my pupils who invited me to her home and began exploring ways and means to reach my Eldorado. The very next day was lucky. I was watching the exodus of the displaced on the Grand Trunk Road when an army van stopped, and a young officer in khaki stepped down, saluted and asked, "What can I do for you,

Sir? I am Captain Luthra". Looking at his face, I remembered he was one of my students at the Mayo School of Arts evening class. I explained to him my mission. He simply said, "Jump in, Sir". I jumped in. Fortunately, I was carrying my stop-over bag, but felt somewhat uneasy not having informed my hostess.

Luthra said he was on evacuation duty. A brigade of the Indian army was stationed at the Lahore cantonment under the command of Brigadier Mohite, for whom I was carrying a letter from my friend Bhardwaj who was the Director of Press Information in New Delhi. The Indian army contingent was engaged in the task of escorting evacuees from the deep interior of Pakistan in convoys to Amritsar. I noticed evidence of decay, devastation and destruction by human hands, flood and elements of nature. Carcasses of animals, dead human bodies and stink kept me stunned throughout the way. At dusk, Captain Luthra opened the door of the van in front of Falletti's Hotel, saluted and said, "May God look after you."

Now, Falletti's Hotel was hardly the place for a beggar that I was, but Luthra had told me that that would be the safest place for me then. I walked in, and again luck seemed to favour me. Two young gentlemen exclaimed how I happened to be there. I vaguely remembered having met them. Some of the Hindu employees of British firms were lodged at the hotel till they could be replaced by Pakistanis. There was not the ghost of a chance to find accommodation at the Falletti's since the rich Muslim refugees from India had occupied all normal places available, and all improvised accommodation possible.

Both the gentlemen suggested that they would ask the management to put an extra bed in one of their rooms. The management agreed to do so.

October can be chilly in Lahore. I felt cold in my cottons and longed to open my trunks lying with Fabri. I began telephoning to friends. Gradually, one after the other came. Iftiqar-ud-din, popularly known as Mian Baghbanpura, was the first to call. Iftiqar was a devoted Congressman with leftist leanings, who had joined the Muslim League shortly before the Partition and was now a minister in the Punjab government. He very kindly offered me hospitality at his home and any help I needed, but I decided to stay put at the hotel in view of other conveniences. Friend Niyazi, a professor at the Government College came and warned me not to move out alone unless he or someone else accompanied me.

Then Fabri arrived and proposed his plan of action. He said it would be necessary to obtain permission of the Deputy Commissioner to remove my household effects and art objects from the studio. He promised to make an appointment with the DC. I met Prof. Bukhari, Principal of the Government College and Faiz Ahmad Faiz, now editor of *The Pakistan Times*, the next evening at the hotel lawn, where they were hosting a dinner to the Governor, an Englishman. Bukhari offered to store all my paintings and studio equipment at the college premises for safe custody. What I gathered from friends I met that the welcome with open arms was true, they all hugged me warmly, but advised that the time was not ripe yet to return. Throwing caution away, I ventured out alone in the streets of Lahore to look at my studio even from outside and call on Manzoor Qader and Ashghari, his wife. I had been away only three months and I felt like a stranger in this city where I had lived for eighteen years. Faces and people then gave me a feel of familiarity. I now saw people crowding the streets who did not seem to belong. Everyone was looking suspiciously at the other and at me. Manzoor was away but Ashghan was happy to see me. She said she herself felt as I

did and dared not go out alone as mischief was around the corner everywhere. She asked me to be out shopping with her and we had a tonga-ride. Fabri came the next day and took me to Mr. Ehsam, the DC. Mr. Ehsam gave me the permit to remove anything I wanted and advised me to seek the assistance of police while doing so. While leaving, he said, "Mr. Sanyal, I hope you are not leaving Lahore for good. Do come back."

### **Lahore, My Lahore!**

My friends, however, instructed me particularly to avoid the police as they thought the police were in league with the looters. While they came to protect, they actually had you robbed. Fabri brought his car and Dr. Gorie, the Chief Conservator of Forests, who was friendly towards me, sent his station wagon to collect my things. Thus equipped, I collected my door-key from comrade Karimullah, but found my doors open to receive me. An old Muslim, the present occupant of my house, very graciously told me to take away what was mine, but there was nothing left to take away except the heavy furniture I had made with exquisite workmanship from the Mayo School of Arts. I pulled the chest of drawers, each one of them was empty. Between two drawers I found stuck the bronze plate with the Mohen-jo-daro Bull I was awarded at the Simla Fine Arts Exhibition. One gold and two silver medals were not there. In fact, the entire household stuff, crockery and cutlery, provisions of food and clothes were removed. Surprisingly, not a single book was touched. I remembered my wife had asked me to bring all her books. At that moment Fabri rushed in and said excitedly, "Sanyal, come away at once. The goondas are coming." Bewildered, I snatched two books from the shelf and jumped into the waiting car and was whisked out.



The two books I held in my hands were *The Story of Philosophy* and *Lust for Life*.

I met Rashid Ahmad, the Deputy Director-General of Radio Pakistan, an old friend. He told me he had left behind in Delhi his set of household furniture with a friend. Would I mind exchanging mine with his ? I happily agreed to part with mine. The next take-over remained to be done at the studio. Mr Bashir Qureshi, the young ICS officer then in charge of the Industries Department, was the controller of evacuee industrial properties, including cinema houses. Qureshi was an enlightened person and appreciator of the arts. Without a moment's hesitation, he instructed Ghulam Nabi who had the key of my studio in his custody to open it for me.

In the meantime, I had met Brigadier Mohite at the cantonment and requested him if he could arrange to transport my paintings across the border. Very bluntly he told me that they were occupied with evacuating human beings and could hardly be bothered with articles of art. He softened slightly and said he could perhaps consider carrying small packets if they were delivered at the cantonment daily. I thanked him and parted.

Now, this Ghulam Nabi was certainly not the Ghulam Nabi of old, the little that I had known of him. He was headmaster of a carpentry school and had taken over the charge of the Mayo School of Arts on the retirement of my friend Mohammad Hussain. He proved to be troublesome. For the successive few days he would ask me to come and wait at the doors of my studio at an appointed hour, but would never turn up. The doors were sealed and he alone was authorised to break the seal. It was risky for me to loiter around.



Frustrated, I went to see Faiz at the old premises of the Civil and Military Gazette. He sympathised with me and wrote a stiff note to Ghulam Nabi. I discovered a student of mine working there as a cartoonist for *The Pakistan Times*. He volunteered to meet Nabi and brought me a letter from him to suggest that I should hand over the studio to his son in writing. That way the studio and its contents would be in safe hands. I knew by now there was a remote chance of my returning to Lahore, so I sent him a message to say that as long as I was away his son could use the place.

A date and time was fixed. I informed Fabri. He and Gorie arrived with their vehicles and also the student. This boy was displaced from Ludhiana. It was not possible to remove everything, so I picked up a few paintings that I liked more than the others and also of such dimensions that could be handled with ease. We left out the sculpture pieces and heavy plaster casts, fixtures, equipment and books and proceeded to the Museum. Fabri made out an inventory, signed and gave it to me in case I wished to claim them in future. I made a gift of a Tirupati wood carving and a painting to his Museum. Nothing more was left for me to do in Lahore except wait for an opportunity to exit. The Art School was an extension of the Museum building, so I walked in. Some of the teachers were surprised to see me and most of them showed concern about my safety. Latif and Ata Mohammed told me, "Saheb, things are not as they were, do go away from here for your own sake".

In times of distress you learn the value of friendship. On the other hand, there are villains ready to exploit your adversity. I met a briefless barrister, a Hindu, who lived not far away from my studio. He said he had a truck and an armed Gurkha at his disposal. If I gave him five hundred, he would see me across with my movables. The barrister found it more paying than

practising law. Usually, he charged a thousand, but I was a neighbour!

I called on Fabri once a day to explore any possibility of crossing the border. Fabri was full of praise for the new administration in Pakistan, but I found him somewhat preoccupied one day. I thought probably his unconventional manners might have upset the officialdom, for I had found him once half-naked in his office chair during the summer months of Lahore. There were no air-conditioners those days. However, he told me that over the weekend he was going to Amritsar to fetch Ratna who was waiting for him at the convent. I knew he had been courting Ratna in my studio whenever he visited and began to paint there. Charles said they were going to be man and wife at Lahore. He added that Ratna's parents were also at Amritsar, but were not aware of Ratna's presence there. He further asked me to meet the parents and tell them that he would do everything to make Ratna happy and they did not have to worry.

So, I prepared to leave with him. The evening before the departure, at the backyard of the Museum, unnoticed by any, we loaded the two trunks. Fabri said that we might also find room for a couple of paintings. So in the afternoon he picked me up from the hotel and proceeded to the Wagha border. The sentry at the border with his bayonet-mounted gun cried, "Halt". He said that the border was closed indefinitely. No one could cross. Even Fabri seemed to be at his wit's end. I told him he was a government servant and white-skinned at that, and had better walk up to the commandant's camp yonder and get clearance. He left the steering wheel and walked up to the tent. While I was waiting for him to return, the Baluch soldier was fuming with foul remarks about the Hindus across the border, not knowing that one was sitting right under his nose. Fabri came back flurried and said it was true that the border was closed. I

told him to tell the sentry, "Hukam mil gaya" and press the accelerator. He did so. We were not shot from behind. He dropped me near the railway station at Amritsar and parted company. I did not know where to stay.

# Lahore Goes Up in Flames

Satish Gujral

✓ Artist

Returning from Bombay in 1946, I set up a graphic art studio at Lahore. Instead of reducing my father's financial burden, I squandered whatever remained of his savings. This was very foolish of me as life in northern India was fast deteriorating into chaos. No one could be certain of what might happen the following day.

I wondered why my father had not stopped me from this misadventure that wiped out all his savings. When I had suggested it to him, he had simply nodded and let me go ahead. Instead of receiving customers, I would sit in my studio and watch never-ending lines of tongas loaded with Hindu and Sikh families going towards the railway station with their trunks and bedding-rolls. They were in a hurry to transfer whatever they could of their possessions to the side of the border they felt would fall to India, and thus be safer for them.

At about this time my father was elected to the newly formed Constituent Assembly representing Rawalpindi division, of which Jhelum was a part. His membership was transferred to Karachi as soon as the country was divided into India and Pakistan. He was in Karachi awaiting his turn to take the oath of loyalty to Pakistan when both sides of the Punjab erupted in civil war on an unprecedented scale, leaving no doubt in anyone's mind that Hindus and Sikhs were not wanted in Pakistan.

I stayed on in Lahore watching different parts of the city go up in flames. The fires and rioting came nearer and nearer towards my home, which was close to the Nishat Cinema. I had just enough time to escape before hooligans came to loot

whatever little I had. The only safe haven I could think of was Lajpat Rai Bhavan where my father's friend Lala Achint Ram and others associated with the Servants of the People Society were staying. I covered the distance of five kilometres at a run. There were many others also fleeing Muslim mobs who were venting their fury on Hindu and Sikh life and property.

After I was safely inside the Bhavan, I realised the magnitude of the calamity that had overtaken the city. The Bhavan and the adjoining DAV College hostel were overflowing with distraught families; more were pouring in every minute. The buildings were converted into the Central Refugee Camp and a contingent of the Dogra regiment was provided to stand guard. We were still more than a fortnight away from the fateful day of August 14 when Pakistan was to become a sovereign independent Islamic state. But we still did not know the fate of Lahore. Would it come to India or go to Pakistan? We tensely awaited the Radcliffe Award which was to decide the issue. The air was thick with rumours. Most newspapers had ceased publication. This further added to the confusion. Those who stayed on in their homes came to the camp to get authentic news. But none was available.

Finally, on August 13, 1947, the Radcliffe Award was announced. It ceded Lahore to Pakistan. The next day the country of Pakistan officially came into being as an independent entity.

For my father, the culmination of what had been his life's mission was, to say the least, ironic. He had worked and suffered for the freedom of his country. Now freedom had come, but instead of one country there were two. Where did he belong? Like many others, he was confident that once the anarchic tide of violence subsided, the warring religious communities would



return to living in peace on both sides of the newly-drawn frontiers.

He had friends among the leaders of the new dominion, and was close to its founder, Mohammed Ali Jinnah. He had been given to understand that Jinnah intended to invite him to join his cabinet of ministers. He arrived in Karachi expecting to take the oath of allegiance to Pakistan, and perhaps be the first and only non-Muslim to be included in the governing council. But by the time he took the oath as a member of the Pakistani parliament, the two nations were on the brink of war. Communal riots had spread all over the two Punjabs, Pakistani and Indian.

My father was flown to Lahore in a military plane in the hope of salvaging a murderous situation aggravated by ruthless arson and plunder. In the evening when he met the Indian Prime Minister Pandit Nehru and Lady Mountbatten who had flown in from New Delhi, he was a very shaken man. So was Nehru. Neither of them had any illusions about the two countries being able to live as friendly neighbours. Nevertheless, to my father's surprise, Nehru asked him if he thought there was any chance of stopping the communal carnage and preventing forced migration and the exchange of populations. There were many at the table when Nehru addressed this question to my father. Why he singled him out when he had only a nodding acquaintance with him remains a mystery. Or perhaps, as my father tried to explain to us later, Panditji only happened to turn towards him but was putting the question to himself. This was the state of bewilderment of all who sat round the table, including Raja Ghaznafer Ali, a newly appointed minister of Jinnah's cabinet. Ghaznafer Ali belonged to Jhelum. He had accompanied my father from Karachi to demonstrate his friendliness. The meeting ended on a note of frustration and despair.

The following day Raja Ghaznafer Ali drove with us to Jhelum, a hundred miles away from Lahore. Political differences had not affected the friendship between the two men. This was odd, as they were of completely different temperaments. My father was a recluse and somewhat puritanical; the raja was a cheerful extrovert, and an unabashed womaniser. He had been a member of Sir Sikander Hayat's Unionist Party. When Sir Sikander died, Ghaznafer Ali joined Mohammed Ali Jinnah's Muslim League and became its only representative in the Punjab Assembly. After he had been inducted into the new cabinet, he suggested my father's name to Mr. Jinnah for a ministerial post.

The drive to Jhelum was a nightmarish reminder of what had happened. At every milestone the faces of the two men became even more grim and anguished. Before we came to the bridge on the Jhelum river, Ghaznafer Ali asked my father if he was still against non-Muslims leaving the district. Without waiting for my father's response, he leaned on his shoulder and said, 'Well, Lalaji, let us do our best to keep them here.' Though my father did not react, the raja concluded that his silence meant approval.

Both seemed to have overestimated their hold over their followers. The joint statement they issued on reaching Jhelum received wide publicity in the national media of both countries. Gandhiji and Jinnah approved of it. However, the actual situation made a mockery of their efforts to restore normalcy. Everywhere they spoke they got a hostile reception. Hindus and Sikhs were incensed by my father's appeal to not leave their homes and accused him of making them *qurbani ke bakrey* (sacrificial goats). Although relations between local Hindus and Muslims had never been very close or relaxed, their differences rarely resulted in violent confrontation. Nevertheless, in small towns and villages, the divide was real and persistent. Hindu-Muslim estrangement

was both cultural and social. Except for the Civil Lines which existed only in district headquarters, the two communities lived in clearly demarcated localities; their occupations were also different. Muslims lived off the land; Hindus and Sikhs in the towns of western Punjab were largely professionals, shopkeepers, moneylenders and traders. Even in the Mayo School hostel which never had more than a score of residents, Hindu and Muslim sections were clearly demarcated. Though a facade of bonhomie was kept up, there was no conscious effort to bridge the ethnic and religious gulf that divided the students. Though we met on the playing fields, sat side by side in the classrooms and occasionally went to each other's rooms, we were housed in different wings of the hostel building and had separate kitchens and dining rooms.

Jhelum was no different from other towns in the region. Its population of about fifteen thousand was half Hindu and half Muslim. The Sikhs were considered a part of the Hindu community. Despite the segregation there was a lot of friendly give and take in everyday life, because the communities depended on each other for their survival. But this was rarely, if ever, extended to visiting each other's homes to share meals. Hindu taboos against eating with Muslims were the biggest stumbling block to social mixing. To the orthodox Hindu, some Muslim dietary habits rendered that community as unacceptable as Hindus of the lowest caste.

My father did his best to get the townspeople to overcome their prejudices, but he gathered very few followers. He established a branch of the Indian National Congress in Jhelum; it received no active support from the Muslims.

The fact that Hindus had responded with enthusiasm was all the more reason for Muslims to keep aloof. More galling to

my father was the discovery that Hindus who had joined the Congress were very enthused by its call for national independence, but were unwilling to befriend Muslims or change their attitude towards untouchables.

My father accepted Raja Ghaznafar Ali's suggestion to appeal to the Hindus and Sikhs of Jhelum to stay on. But as the violence escalated, he came to the conclusion that there was no option for non-Muslims except to leave for India.

We were in Jhelum when suddenly hordes of *kabailis* (Afghan tribesmen) descended on the town. They were on their way to Kashmir to drive Dogras, Brahmins and Sikhs out of the state and annexe it to Pakistan. Since Jhelum was the closest station from Mirpur, the border town of the state, it had been chosen by the Pakistani army commanders as one of the staging points for the invasion of Kashmir. The Pakistani leaders were wary of taking personal risks and hoped that the frontier tribesmen, ever eager to plunder and to abduct non-Muslim women, would do the job for them.

The tribes who lived in the no man's land between Afghanistan and Pakistan recognised neither law nor government. Their very presence struck terror into the hearts of the Hindus and Sikhs of north-western Punjab. For many centuries the main occupation of the tribal hordes was looting and kidnapping for ransom. Their chief targets were Hindus and Sikhs because in the tribal consciousness killing and robbing infidels elevated marauders to the status of mujahideen, warriors of Islam. Even the British with all their military resources had been unable to subdue these unruly tribesmen, and had left them to be controlled by their *jirgahs* (tribal councils).

The day the first band of tribals descended on Jhelum



was unforgettable. They eyed our refugee camp as predators assess their quarry. They began with their traditional khattak dance, going round and round our terrified camp to the beat of drums, firing rifles in the air while they danced to warn us of our impending fate. Had it not been for the pleading and cajoling by local officials led by Raja Ghaznafar Ali, neither I nor anyone else would have lived to tell the tale. The experience finally convinced Ghaznafar Ali that it was time for non-Muslims to depart from the 'Land of the Pure'—Pakistan.

As the conflagration spread, Hindus and Sikhs in their thousands sought refuge in our *mohalla*, which soon became a refugee camp. Every newcomer had his tragic tale to tell each bloodier and more spine-chilling than the last. I lost all sense of time. Death became a gruesome reality in our daily lives.

My introvert father rarely allowed anyone to witness his emotions, but there were moments when he seemed to sweat tension from each pore. At such moments he would sit huddled with his eyes shut. He was a God-fearing man, but seeing what God's creatures could do to one another shook his faith. Here were human beings behaving worse than wild animals. I wondered to whom my father now addressed his prayers.

With the ferocious *kabailis* having effectively increased the resolve of local Hindus and Sikhs to migrate to India, we began the evacuation, which turned out to be as bloody as the carnage that followed. Almost twice a week I would accompany a convoy consisting of dozens of trucks packed with several hundred people on the journey that for many would turn out to be their last. In spite of the armed Dogra contingent we were provided during each trip, the Muslim ambushes were difficult to withstand because the attackers outnumbered our guards.

The assaults varied in their character and intensity. If we



were lucky, we were just ordered at gunpoint to surrender all our belongings. Those who resisted or showed any signs of reluctance, especially women who did not want to give up their jewellery, were seized and forcibly deprived of their valuables with horrifying brutality that left them badly injured and terrorised beyond belief.

Still, this was nothing compared to the escalating incidents of planned genocide. These not only resulted in the almost total annihilation of men, women and children, but were carried out in such a ruthless and bloody manner that they numbed the senses of those who were helpless witnesses and survivors.

Once at Lala Musa, a small town roughly fifteen miles from Jhelum on the way to Amritsar, the ambush ended in the general slaughter of all the men, the rape of women on the spot and the abduction of a few before the rest were butchered. The murderers celebrated the carnage by impaling infants on spikes and going into a frenzied bhangra dance, accompanied by wild drumming.

The fact that this gory event took place in a location that happened to be part of Pakistan did not mean that such atrocities were restricted to that part of the divide alone, or that Hindus and Sikhs were the only ones who were subjected to such demonic treatment. I witnessed no less inhuman scenarios enacted in areas that had become part of free India, the only difference being that the victims were those who happened to belong to the Islamic faith.

The trips I made with refugee convoys often did not terminate at Wagha, a hamlet that had become the border post between India and Pakistan, nor at Amritsar which had become the terminal for depositing refugees. I had to make sorties to Jalandhar, sometimes to drop off the stray girls and children we

rescued from the kidnappers, and at other times to seek sorely needed assistance from the newly established East Punjab government which was camping at Jalandhar. Since my father was a government official, he gave me a letter of authority that enabled me to cross the border easily. We took an armed contingent with us to rescue women, but I escorted them directly from the recovery sites to camps on the Indian side on my own. This way my father ensured that in case there was any retaliation, at least my life would be saved, if not his. This made me an unwilling witness to the slaughter on the Indian side. The worst among these was the attack on a Muslim girls' hostel in Amritsar. The inmates were stripped and forced to march in a procession through the Hall Bazar, the town's main market. There these girls were gang-raped and subjected to the most perverse treatment that any sadistic imagination could devise, before being murdered.

Our car was forced to a halt as the thoroughfare was packed with crowds who wished to watch this gruesome *tamasha*. Sitting in the car, I searched for signs of horror or compassion on the faces in the crowd. I could trace none.

The agonies of Partition left their impact on all those who were witnesses. Over time, the horrific scenes I saw no longer created in me the same intensity of revulsion I used to feel in the beginning. My senses succumbed to a gradual hardening. No calamity seemed to affect my numbed perceptions, which had frozen into a block.

One redeeming phenomenon of the sordid Partition epic was the way the unfortunates who formed refugee convoys would treat each other in an encounter. Though the instances of such encounters turning into massacres were not uncommon, these were outnumbered by instances when both sides sympathised

with their common fate. They supplied each other with drinking water and other crucial necessities, but more significantly with profound emotional understanding.

One such encounter ended in the so-called 'Beas catastrophe'—a calamity enacted not by humans but by nature, which that year seemed to be as hellbent on destroying mankind as mankind seemed on destroying itself. There had been torrential rains and floods. An incessant spell of rain flooded all the five rivers of Punjab in the month of September 1947, when the evacuation and migration of refugees was at its chaotic height.

Displaced and exiled people did not escape only in trucks or trains; a much greater number was struggling on foot and by bullock cart towards the borders that had just been carved into the subcontinent. These convoys were dozens of miles long, stretching so far that the vanguard would have crossed the border while the rear would still be several days from safety. More often than not the convoy disintegrated under ambush; rarely would an entire convoy successfully reach the other side in tact.

The 'Beas catastrophe' affected not one but two convoys coming from opposite directions. They camped on the stretch of road that lay between the Beas river and one of its seasonal tributaries, about five miles away.

Pounded by torrential rain, and without any shelter, these afflicted souls were soon relieved of their suffering. Both the Beas and its tributary rose in spate and sucked thousands of humans and animals into a foaming, thundering, watery grave.

Even weeks after the catastrophe one could not pass this

stretch of road without burying one's nose in layers of towels, so overpowering was the stench of rotting corpses.

No burial or cremation was ever performed. And like most people, each time I passed the area I was more anxious about not catching some disease by inhaling the foul air than about the fact that so much life had been tragically destroyed here.

Fifty years after that fateful day, as I sit down to write these lines, I wonder which was the greater casualty: the loss of millions of lives and the uprooting of still many more from their homes, or the loss of compassion in myself and in other people. Compassion is the trait that distinguishes humans from animals. How many survivors of Partition, from all faiths, could have retained this, after experiencing so much terror and anguish?

By March 1948, we had managed to send to India most of the families who had been brought into the camp from the area entrusted to my father. The task seemed endless, as there still remained young women who had been abducted, children who had gone missing and others mercifully given shelter by their Muslims friends. The exercise of rescuing Hindus and Sikhs was made perilous by the fact that our region had large numbers of retired soldiers who had been allowed to keep weapons and ammunition with them. The local administration was not equipped to deal with this kind of armed and dangerous populace. Despite the intense danger that the rescue missions involved, my father refused to abandon victims to their fate and escape to India. Most families of these missing people, who were in our care, also refused to leave till their relatives were found.

To add to our difficulties, the army personnel allotted to us for security were replaced by lightly-armed Pakistani



policemen. The war in Kashmir had hardened the attitude of the Pakistan government towards us. Because of Jhelum's strategic importance in the Kashmir operations, the government wanted us out of the way as soon as possible. We refused to budge and continued our efforts to rescue the lost and the abducted for another three months. We were able to save nearly three hundred people and despatch them to India. How we did it is a long story. Each case was a tragic drama in itself.

I have never been able to erase the episode of Jaswant Kaur from my memory. She was recovered from Khewra, a place known for its salt mines. The village lay about fifty miles deep in the ravines. Jaswant Kaur, a Sikh girl of fifteen, was saved by her neighbour Ghulam Ishaq when her home was attacked one night by mobs from the neighbouring villages. In the melee her father and two brothers were killed. Her two sisters were abducted but her mother and a teenage brother managed to slip out to safety and joined a party of Hindus heading for the refugee camp. Presuming that all her family had been massacred, Jaswant Kaur had hidden herself in a shed at the back of her house. Ghulam Ishaq found her two days later when he took over the abandoned house for himself.

Ghulam Ishaq was a friend of the girl's father. He also presumed that Jaswant Kaur was the lone survivor of her family. Having daughters who were Jaswant's age, Ghulam Ishaq looked upon the young girl with paternal affection. This alone could not have saved Jaswant Kaur's life in the atmosphere of frenzy and phobia that prevailed in the region. So he announced his intention of marrying her. A *nikah* ceremony was performed but the marriage was not consummated. This was only known to his immediate family.

Kartari, Jaswant Kaur's mother, was brought to the camp



in Jhelum with her son. Both were in a dazed state. Kartari was inconsolable and refused to leave the camp till her daughters were found. She had seen her husband and two sons murdered before her eyes, but she was convinced that her daughters were still alive.

We had no soldiers or policemen to help us recover abducted women. My father tried persuasion. He had been legal adviser to the salt mines administration and had sorted out some family disputes in Khewra, so he decided to approach the villagers personally. One of his clients was Ghulam Ishaq. When my father called on him he did not know that Jaswant Kaur was in Ishaq's custody. He asked Ishaq to help in the recovery of three Hindu girls known to be missing from Khewra. Ghulam Ishaq pleaded ignorance of their whereabouts. To reassure my father of his sincerity, he came to Jhelum.

Jaswant Kaur's mother fell at his feet and broke down. Ghulam Ishaq commiserated with her without divulging anything. Much as he was moved by Kartari's grief, he was not willing to part with her daughter because he had fallen in love with her. He returned to Khewra promising to do his best to find the missing girls.

It did not take long for my father to discover that Jaswant Kaur was in Ghulam Ishaq's house. His faith in Ishaq's sincerity was rudely shaken. He also came to know that Ishaq had married the girl and was powerful enough locally to resist any pressure from the administration. The only way out was to somehow inform Jaswant Kaur that her mother and brother were alive and staying in the Jhelum camp, and then plot her escape.

Anwar Khan, a police constable in the small contingent provided to us by local authorities, had been with us from the

beginning and had become quite involved in our mission. He was the one who had told my father of Jaswant Kaur's whereabouts. He now managed to inform the girl that her mother and brother were alive and expected her to join them in the camp at Jhelum.

He told no one how he managed to reach her. By then Jaswant Kaur had gained Ghulam Ishaq's confidence and persuaded him to let her see her mother and brother, promising she would return to him. The night before they left for Jhelum they consummated their marriage.

Once reunited with her mother, Jaswant Kaur went through another trauma. She found it hard to part from her. She confessed to feeling torn between her love for her widowed mother and her loyalty to Ishaq, who had been so protective and trusting. Ishaq had moved to Jhelum and visited her every day. The situation was fraught with danger. Ultimately Jaswant Kaur accepted my father's suggestion. One afternoon, she left with her mother and brother and a few others for Amritsar.

My father sent me with the group because he feared Ghulam Ishaq's wrath would fall on us. He then broke the news to the jilted husband. Much to my father's surprise, instead of exploding with rage, Ghulam Ishaq broke down and wept unrestrainedly. He was a giant with a glowing pink complexion which betrayed his Afghan ancestry. To see such a strong man so reduced by grief was a spectacle my father found hard to bear. It took a while for Ghulam Ishaq to compose himself. Then he told my father what he had gone through. He thanked my father for sparing him further embarrassment.

The story of Jaswant Kaur did not end there. Like several other women and children we 'rescued', she was left with my

mother who had taken charge of a temporary refugee camp she had set up for rescued women awaiting others of their families to join them. As days went by their chances of leaving Pakistan became bleaker and bleaker. Many of them were pregnant, and their families refused to take them back. The stigma of having unmarried girls bearing illegitimate children was not acceptable to their kith and kin.

This was what happened to Jaswant Kaur. The results of her cohabitation with Ghulam Ishaq began to show. At first her mother Kartari accepted the inevitable. But her teenaged brother Bhagwan Singh was adamant. The family *izzat* (honour) had been sullied. They would have to suffer the taunts of others for the rest of their lives. Kartari came round to her son's views and the two decided to abandon Jaswant Kaur to her fate. My mother's threats to expel them from the camp had no effect. They slipped out of the camp, leaving Jaswant Kaur to survive as best as she could.

It was the fate of women like Jaswant Kaur that determined the future course of my parents' life.

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By this time my father's membership in Pakistan's parliament had been transferred to the Indian parliament. My mother was unwilling to abandon the women under her care and let them go to government-run refugee camps which had rapidly become like brothels. My father had very little choice in the matter. He could not think of being separated from his wife and spending part of his life away from her in Delhi. He decided to make his home in Jalandhar.

He resigned from the Indian parliament and started the

Nari Niketan (women's home) at Jalandhar. It was gradually opened to women other than victims of the Partition. My parents jointly ran this institution for destitute women till my father's death in 1979. Then my mother took over and ran it single-handedly till she died in 1988. The Niketan did not pull down its shutters. My father left his savings to the Niketan Trust. It carries on its good work under the supervision of my brother Inder. Apart from providing food and lodging, it also runs a high school for the children of its inmates, and for orphans.

The citizens of Jalandhar expressed their gratitude by naming the road that runs in front of Nari Niketan after my father. My mother, who survived my father by eight years, refused to accept any honours from the citizens or the government. She was happy that her husband had been honoured and was content to bask in his posthumous glory.

# ***Three***





## Lahore, Partition and Independence

### Khushwant Singh

Having spent two carefree years in Government College, I was no stranger to Lahore. But coming there to earn my living was a different matter. I had everything laid on for me—a well-furnished flat and office, membership of the two leading clubs, the Cosmopolitan, meant for the Indian elite, and the more exclusive Gymkhana, which was largely an English preserve with no more than a dozen Oxbridge-educated 'natives'. My father's and father-in-law's status opened the doors of judges and ministers to me. With my young and attractive wife, we soon became the most sought after and photographed couple in Lahore.

The only thing missing was the clientele. I spent a couple of hours in the morning in my office pouring over law books, then went to the Bar Room for gossip. I went to the Courtrooms to hear important cases being argued, spent an hour or so in the Coffee House for more gossip, and returned for lunch. For the first few months not a single litigant crossed my threshold. For a while I worked as a junior to Kirpa Narain, who had moved from Delhi to Lahore. One day he collapsed and died while arguing a case. I shifted over as junior to Jai Gopal Sethi, who had the largest criminal practice in the Punjab. He occasionally got his clients to throw a few crumbs as junior's fees at me. I was told that I should acquire a good munshi, or clerk. They are quite an institution in the Indian legal profession. Where there are no solicitors, as in the Punjab, they do the soliciting—talking to clients, sorting out their papers, fixing the fee to be extracted, extracting it along with their *munshiana* of ten per cent. Many did much more. They went to the railway stations and bus stands as hotel agents do, spotted litigants and persuaded them to

take on their employer as their advocate. All manner of persuasion was practised: their master's wife was the judge's mistress, or vice versa, or he was the ablest 'England-returned Barrister', who played tennis and bridge with the Sahibs, drank and danced with their mems.

The first clerk I hired was a sharp little fellow from Himachal. He persuaded me to let him go on tour in Punjab's districts to do propaganda for me. He was away for a month, presented me his travel bills, and assured me that many leading lawyers of the district courts had promised to send their appellate work to me. None came.

The second one was a Shia Muslim. He got me a brief as a junior to a leading lawyer from Lucknow in a case involving two branches of rich Shia zamindars of Bahraich over their property in Lahore. I got a small fee but lost the friendship of the Lahore head of the family. We also lost the case. Thereafter having nothing to do, I let my munshi hire a maulvi who taught me the Koran for an hour every morning. Some time later the munshi left me on the pretext that taking a salary from a non-believer who was not only not a Muslim but who did not believe in God was *haraam*, unlawful.

In sheer desperation I hired the most expensive munshi in Lahore. He was a strapping, six-foot Sikh Jat who was a renowned tout. I paid him Rs 10,000 as advance—a sum unheard of to secure his services.

He was familiar with Sikh villages in Lahore district. Whenever there was a murder in any village—and there were at least three or four every month—he went to condole with the bereaved family as well as call on the family whose members had been named as accused. He managed to get a brief from

one side or the other. Instead of the tenth due to him as *munshiana*, he took a third of my fee.

However, criminal cases started coming my way. I won some, lost others. I also discovered that hiring renowned lawyers at high fees did not really make much difference in a criminal case. If a magistrate or judge was friendly towards me, I got bail for my clients. And often a lighter sentence. There was an Anglo-Indian lawyer who knew hardly any law but managed to get cases through his touts because he was a sahib. Also a Parsi who wore a monocle, hummed and hawed his way through his briefs in a fake upper-class English accent, and managed to make a reasonable living. There was a Muslim lawyer who gained notoriety for never preparing his briefs and throwing his clients on the mercy of the court. 'Who knows the law better than Your Honour? Who am I to tell you the real facts of the case? Your Honour will no doubt grasp them better than I and do justice to my client!' Believe it or not, he did better than most lawyers who burned the midnight oil poring over their briefs and wrangled with judges.

It was a hard, back-breaking, soulless profession. I took on undefended cases in Sessions Courts for a fee of Rs 16 per day; I appeared free of charge in cases against communists; I took on part-time teaching at the Law College; I was put on the panel of defence lawyers at the High Court and then on the panel of the Advocate General. I hardly ever made more than a thousand rupees a month. My father continued to subsidise me. He bought me a larger apartment with property which brought me some rent; then a large house on Lawrence Road facing Lahore's biggest park, Lawrence Gardens (later renamed Bagh-e-Jinnah). None of this made me change my opinion of the legal profession.

Perhaps it was my failure to make it in a big way that soured me. I kept asking myself, 'Is there anything creative in practising law? Don't I owe more to the one life I have than making money out of other people's quarrels? A common prostitute renders more service to society than a lawyer. If anything the comparison with the whore is unfair to her. She at least serves a social need, and gives her clients pleasure for their money; a lawyer doesn't even do that.' I have little doubt that if I had stuck to the law a little longer, I would have made it to the Bench and perhaps even to the Supreme Court. Jokers with less practice than myself and less legal acumen were elevated to the Bench; a couple ended up as Judges of the Supreme Court. Never did I regret giving up the law; my only regret was that I wasted five years studying it and another seven trying to make a living out of it.

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Having not much to keep me in the law courts, I began to read books which I should have read in my years in college: anthologies of English poetry, Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, Tolstoy, Oscar Wilde, Aldous Huxley, Hindu philosophy by Radhakrishnan. I also began to review books for *The Tribune* and wrote a short eulogistic booklet on Stalin for the Friends of the Soviet Union, of which I was a founder member. When on vacation in Mashobra I did little besides reading in the mornings and taking long walks in the afternoons. Every afternoon I strode alongside my wife, who was on a bicycle, six miles down to Simla. We had tea at Wenger's or Davico's, watched the pageant of English officials, Indian Ministers, and their over-dressed wives strolling along the Mall. And then six miles back to Mashobra. Once Sir Charles Carson, Finance Minister of the Maharaja of Gwalior, spent a couple of days with us. He told me that he had walked to Tatapani hot springs, on the banks of the Sutlej 5000



feet below Simla, and back, in a day. The following weekend, I did the same. I bathed in the sulphur spring, drank a bottle of beer cooled in the icy, fast-running Sutlej, and was back home in time for dinner. Once I took a bet with my sister's husband, Jaspal Singh, who was as tough a Sikh Jat as I had met, that I could outwalk him. We set out on a full-moon-lit night on the Hindustan-Tibet road. He had two of his nephews with him, both in their early twenties, and two Kashmiri porters to carry our provisions. After fifteen miles, the two boys and the porters refused to go any further. We left them at a dak bungalow and proceeded towards our destination, Narkanda. Later that night we stopped at another dak bungalow in the midst of a fir forest to refresh ourselves. Jaspal drank milk by the gallon; I took hot tea laced with brandy. It was eerie in the moonlit stillness. We were talking very loudly when out of the seemingly untenanted bungalow came a loud yell, 'b...off!' We did. We arrived at Narkanda early in the morning. We took whatever the chowkidar could give us: ghee parathas and over-sweetened tea. We started our journey back home. We kept pace all day and late into the evening. My feet began to bleed. At a dak bungalow about ten miles from Mashobra, I stopped to tie them with rags provided by the chowkidar. Jaspal decided to go ahead to claim victory. I followed a hundred yards behind him. He got to Mashobra at about midnight, told the family that I had given up on the way, and went triumphantly to bed. I went straight to my bedroom. He was boasting about his feat at the breakfast table when I joined him. Technically he had won. We had done seventy-two miles more or less non-stop. Both of us spent the next few days nursing our sore feet. 'If you had worked for seventy-two hours instead of walking seventy-two miles, you would have been a wiser man,' was the only comment my father made. I was not allowed to undertake any more long walks. But a fortnight later, when my father was away in Delhi, I had to return to Lahore on some business. I decided to walk down to Kalka, which was

sixty-five miles away, downhill most of the way. I left Mashobra while it was still dark. I got to Dharampur (fifty miles) by the afternoon and was having tea at the rest house when suddenly my father turned up and joined me for tea. It occurred to him that I did not have a taxi waiting for me. 'Where is your taxi?' he asked me. I had to admit I had walked down all the way. He lost his temper and ordered his chauffeur to get a taxi to Kalka and saw me ride away in it. A great pity! The one thing I looked forward to after the marathon walk to Kalka was a shower at the railway station followed by a bottle of chilled beer and a sumptuous meal.

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I have the happiest memories of the summer months I spent in my parents' beautiful house in Mashobra. It occupied an entire hill, giving a spectacular view of snow-clad mountains to the north and deep valleys on the other side. My mother had a large cement platform raised which overlooked the road running from Simla to Mashobra bazaar, Gables Hotel, past the estate of the Raja of Faridkot, to a nine-hole golf course at Naldera. We spent most of our mornings and afternoons on this platform, sunning ourselves, or in the shade of a holly-oak which stood alongside it. The bird-life was fantastic. Barbets cried all day long. Flocks of scarlet minivets flew among the cherry trees. Sibilas nested in a creeper-covered elm. Flycatchers, including the spectacular silver-white paradise flycatcher with his two ribbons of tail trailing behind him, were not an uncommon sight. Lammergeiers and Himalayan eagles floated in the air. Early mornings and late evenings blackbirds perched on our roof and broke into song. All through moonlit nights, nightjars called to each other. A family of flying squirrels had their nest in our eaves; we often saw them float down from tree to tree and hop about on the tennis court.

Sundays were special. We woke to the peal of bells from St. Swithin's Church at the entrance to Mashobra Bazaar. It had been built by Allen, a leather-merchant of Kanpur, and was named after the patron saint of cobblers. It was exactly like a village chapel in England, with a lych-gate, stained glass windows, and High Altar. English folk staying at Gables Wild Flower Hall on the crest of the hill trooped in in their Sunday best for the morning service. Thereafter they strolled about the bazaar exuding the fragrance of lavender and French perfumes.

My father was an Anglophile and loved entertaining. Once he sent invitations to all the European residents of Wild Flower Hall and Gables. They came in their dozens because it was wartime and nothing very exciting happened in Simla. We hung Chinese lanterns all the way from the entrance gate up to our house. We had a Goan band to play dance music. The Sahib's introduced themselves and their mems, drank our Scotch and wines, ate our curried meal, danced, and departed. The next morning I asked my father if it had been worthwhile blowing up thousands of rupees entertaining total strangers. 'English people never forget anyone who is hospitable to them,' he replied. He was right. A few days later, when he was going down to Delhi, an English officer came to him in the rail-car and introduced himself as one who had been at his party. They got talking. My father landed a very lucrative contract to supply provisions to the army.

The Raja of Faridkot was also very fond of entertaining white people. Every autumn he would arrange bull-fights in an open arena. Villagers came in their thousands bringing their champion bulls. Foreign and important Indian guests sat on sofas watching the bulls tangle with each other. After the show, the Raja entertained his guests at a banquet with his private band playing. Since we often had English friends staying with us, we were often invited. The Raja could be as generous as he could be mean. He served champagne to everyone, but when it

came to whisky, his bearers served Indian whisky to Indians, Scotch only to the whites. I discovered this one evening when we took Evan Charlton, editor of *The Statesman*, and his wife Joy with us to one of his parties. When I complained to Evan about the quality of the whisky he snorted, 'You are a suspicious so-and-so! My whisky is fine.' We exchanged glasses. He wrinkled his nose when he tasted mine. The Raja could also be very uncouth. Whenever my father invited him, he would drink himself silly and stay on after all the other guests had left. He made passes at my nieces, then only in their teens, and at other young women around. My poor parents, who usually retired at 9 p.m., were kept up till midnight.

More than anything else, I loved my long evening walks. When not bound for Simla, I explored other mountain roads. There was a solitary, shaded path which ran through a pine and fir forest to an Italian monastery called San Demiano. Another went steeply uphill from Mashobra to a small orchard called Danes Folly towards Wild Flower Hotel. From the top of the hill you could see the mountain range with Shali peak rising to above 10,000 feet and a broad stream dividing the two ranges. During the rainy season, the Valley was often covered over by mists. Mysteriously the mists would lift and the sun break through, lighting the rain-washed, emerald green hillsides and setting the stream that ran between them sparkling in the sunlight.

Once a year in the autumn there was a fair in village Sipi, a mile or so below Mashobra bazaar. Villagers brought their nubile daughters and young sons to arrange marriages for them. It was rumoured that pretty girls—Himachal girls can be fair, petite, almond-eyed and wanton—were put up for sale to the highest bidder. I saw many pretty village lasses but never saw one being taken away by any outsider.

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Not having much to do in Lahore and yet possessing a nice home and a lovely-looking (though by now somewhat over-assertive) wife, I had no dearth of visitors. Foremost among these was my friend Mangat Rai, who was posted there. Being in the ICS he was much sought after by Christian fathers with marriageable daughters. He also wrote pieces which he read out to an ever-admiring circle of friends. One which received encores was about a hen which laid eggs in a drain. It was always heard with open-mouthed admiration. He became a daily visitor to my apartment. Every evening after his office he hauled his bicycle up the stairs and often stayed on for drinks and dinner. Whatever reservations he had about my wife vanished; it was evident that he was getting quite enamoured of her. To leave me in no doubt he wrote me a letter confessing that he was in love with her and seeking my permission to continue visiting us. I passed this letter on to my wife. I could see that she was highly flattered. I treated it as a joke and wrote back assuring him that he would be as welcome as before. I had reason to regret my magnanimity. Mangat Rai had enormously persuasive powers to bring people round to his point of view. Most of it was destructive and designed to reduce others to plasticine that he could mould in whatever shape he wanted. My wife at the time spent some hours every morning at a painting studio run by B.C. Sanyal. He began dropping in at the studio and persuaded her that painting was a futile pastime. She gave up painting. She was a very keen tennis player and always spent the evenings playing with me at the club. He persuaded her that cycling was more fun, so she abandoned tennis and went cycling with him. She was punctilious about religious ritual: opening the Granth Sahib every morning, reading a hymn or two, and wrapping it up in the evening. He convinced her of the futility of ritual. She began to miss out on her daily routine of prayers and ritual. He had become a hard drinker. My wife took to drinking hard. He was very open about everything he did. He told my wife that one evening, when seeing off his sister at the railway station, he had run into a



young Christian girl known to us. She had no transportation. He offered to ride her back on his cycle. She sat on the front bar. He invited her to his apartment without any conditions attached. She accepted. They spent the night in the same bed. He admitted he felt a little guilty because he loved her and not the girl he had bedded. Instead of feeling let down, my wife admired his candour and was more drawn to him. Inevitably their association came to be much talked about.

Amongst others who became regular visitors to my home were Justice Gopal Das Khosla, also of the ICS, and his wife Shakuntala. He was taken with my wife; I with his. So we were on the level. Then there was the Canadian couple, Wilfred Cantwell-Smith, Scholar of Islamics working on Indian Islam, and his wife Muriel, working for a doctor's degree at the Medical College. There was P.N. Kirpal, then lecturer of history at Dayal Singh College. He was destined to stay in our lives for the rest of our days. There were others like Nawabzada Mahmood Ali Khan and his Sikh wife Satnam; Wilburn and Usha Lal who were distantly related to Mangat Rai; Professor Inder Mohan Varma, lecturer in English at the Government College; Bishen Narain and his wife Shanti, both friends of the Khoslas. Others came and went. Occasionally, when he was in Lahore, there was Arthur's younger brother John Lall, also in the ICS. John was a bit of a playboy with an incredibly British accent. He was given to making wisecracks at my expense. 'Kaval,' he said to my wife one day, 'if you have a sister let her marry your bearded husband and you marry me.' I was the target of witticisms from both the Lall brothers. With John I settled scores when he brought his fiancée Hope, a dark, pudgy girl, to introduce to us. The next day he dropped in he asked me what I thought of her. 'She will be a perpetual exercise in faith and charity,' I told him. He made no wisecracks thereafter. My day of reckoning with Arthur had to wait some years.

Two people who I met in my early years in Lahore deserve

mention. One was the painter, Amrita Sher Gill. Her fame had preceded her before she took up residence in a block of flats across the road from ours. She had recently married her Hungarian cousin, Victor Egan, a doctor of medicine who wanted to set up practice in Lahore. Amrita was said to be beautiful and promiscuous. Pandit Nehru was known to have succumbed to her charms; stories of her sexual appetite were narrated with a lot of slavering.

I didn't know how much truth there was to gossip of her being a nymphomaniac, but I was eager to get to know her. I did not have to wait for very long. It was summertime. My wife and six-month-old son had gone up to Kasauli to stay with her parents. One afternoon when I came home for lunch, I found a tankard of beer and a lady's handbag on a table in my sitting room and a heavy aroma of French perfume. I tiptoed to the kitchen to ask my cook who it was. 'I don't know,' he replied, 'a memsahib in a sari. She asked for you. I told her you would soon be back for lunch. She looked round the flat and helped herself to the beer from the fridge. She is in the bathroom.' I knew it could only be Amrita Sher Gill. And so it was. She came into the sitting room and introduced herself. She told me of the flat she had rented across the road and wanted advice about carpenters, plumbers, tailors, and the like. I told her whatever I knew about such people. I tried to size her up. I couldn't look her in the face because she had that bold, brazen kind of look which made a timid man like me turn his gaze downwards. She was short in stature and sallow complexioned (being half Sikh, half Hungarian). Her hair was parted in the middle and severely bound at the back. She had a bulbous nose with blackheads showing. She was full-lipped with faint traces of a moustache on her upper lip. I told her I had heard a lot about her paintings and pointed to some water colours on the wall which my wife had done. 'She is just learning to paint,' I said by way of explanation. 'That's obvious,' she snorted. Politeness was not one of her virtues; she

believed in speaking her mind however rude or unkind it might be.

A few weeks later, I had another sample of her rudeness. I had picked up my wife and son from Kasauli and taken them up to Mashobra. Amrita was staying with her friends the Chaman Lals, who had rented a house a little above my father's. I invited them for lunch. We were having beer and gin slings on the open platform under the shade of the holly-oak. My son was in a playpen learning to stand on his own feet. Everyone was paying him compliments: he was indeed a very pretty child with curly hair, large eyes, and dimpled cheeks. 'What an ugly little boy!' remarked Amrita. Others protested their embarrassment. My wife froze. Amrita continued to drink her beer without concern. Later, when she heard what my wife had to say about her manners, and that she had described her as a bloody bitch, Amrita told her informant, 'I'll teach that woman a lesson. I'll seduce her husband.'

I waited eagerly for the day of seduction. It never came. When we returned to Lahore, my wife declared our home out of bounds for Amrita. Some common friends told us that Amrita was not keeping well. One night a cousin of hers came over to spend the night with us because Amrita was too ill to have guests. He told us that she was in a delirium and kept mumbling calls at bridge—she was an avid bridge player. Next morning we heard she was dead. She was only thirty-one.

I went over to her apartment. Her old, bearded father Umrao Singh was in a daze, her mother in a state of hysterics. They had just arrived from Summer Hill (Simla) and could not believe that their young, talented daughter was gone for ever.

That afternoon a dozen of us followed her cortege to the cremation ground where her husband set alight her funeral pyre.

When we returned to the Egans' apartment, the police were waiting for him. England had declared war on Hungary as an ally of Nazi Germany. Egan was an enemy national. He was lucky to have been taken into police custody.

It took some time for Amrita's mother to get the details of her daughter's illness and death. She held her nephew and son-in-law responsible for it. She bombarded ministers, officials, friends (including myself) with letters accusing him of murder. Murder. I am certain it was not.

Carelessness, I am equally certain, it was. My version of her death came from Dr. Raghubir Singh, then a leading physician of Lahore. He was summoned to her bedside at midnight when she was beyond hope of recovery. He believed that she had become pregnant and had been aborted by her husband. The operation had gone wrong. She had bled profusely and developed peritonitis. Her husband wanted Dr. Raghubir Singh to give her a blood transfusion and offered his own blood for it. Dr. Raghubir Singh refused to do so without finding out their blood grouping. While the two doctors were arguing with each other, Amrita slipped out of life.

Many people, such as the art critic Karl Khandalawala, Iqbal Singh, and her nephew, the painter Vivan Sundaram, have written about Amrita. Badruddin Tyabji has given a vivid account of how he was seduced by her. Vivan admits she had many lovers. Her real passion in life was another woman—she was also lesbian. And she was a superb painter.

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Among the guests who stayed in my apartment while my wife and son were away for the summer was the Communist Danial Latifi. He had been in and out of jail and the food they



gave him at the Party headquarters did not agree with him. Being at the time close to the Party, I invited him to spend some weeks with me to recoup his health. Danial was then, as he is today, a compulsive talker. His flat, monotone voice retains the same soporific quality. One evening two of my friends dropped in. Both were very drunk. Danial converted their polite queries into a long monologue on dialectical materialism and the class struggle. I went out to take some fresh air. When I returned half an hour later, Danial was still holding forth. Both my friends were fast asleep. Through Danial I received two other visitors in turn. The first was Sripad Dange, then on the run from the police. He had to pretend to be my servant. He spent most of his time reading my books. When anyone came to see me he would disappear into the kitchen. Another was Ajoy Ghosh, also then underground. He was a dour, uncommunicative man. His mistress and later wife, Litto, dropped in every day and spent many hours with him when I was at the High Court. Many years later, in England, I asked my friend Everette of the CID if he had known of these men having stayed with me. He said he had, but it had been decided not to arrest them, only to keep a watch on my apartment and note down the names of people who came to visit them.

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A person who dominated my life in my Lahore years was Manzur Qadir. He was a couple of years older than me, had done his Bar in England, and had practised in the district courts at Lyallpur. He had picked up a considerable practice and a reputation as an upright man of uncommon ability. His father, Sir Abdul Qadir, had been a judge of the Lahore High Court and a litterateur: as editor of *Makhzan*, he was the first to publish Allama Iqbal's poems. Manzur had married Asghari, the daughter of Mian Sir Fazal Hussain. She had been married earlier to the profligate Nawab of Hoti Mardan and had a daughter by him.



The daughter had died and she had divorced her husband. She was a great beauty—the Russian artist Svetoslav Roerich had used her as a model for his paintings of the Madonna. At the time, Asghari considered Manzur below her ‘imperial’ status and felt she had done him a great favour. He was a short, balding, beady-eyed man wearing thick glasses. He was evidently very much in love with his wife and patiently suffered her tantrums. They moved to Lahore with their daughter Shireen, who was the same age as my son Rahul. In Lahore they had a son, Basharat, who was two years younger than Shireen. It did not take long for Manzur and I to get acquainted and become friends. Fortunately our respective wives, both equally prickly characters, also hit it off well. We began to eat in each other’s homes every day. My wife shared Manzur’s enthusiasm for the cinema: they saw at least one picture together every week; also his passion for mangoes. Between them they would demolish a dozen at one sitting with great gusto.

Manzur was by any standards a most unusual character. He was without doubt the ablest up-and-coming lawyer in the Punjab. He and his uncle, Mohammad Saleem, the famous tennis player who represented India in the Davis Cup for fifteen years, spent hours arguing points of law after they had done a day’s work in the High Court. Both men observed the highest standards of rectitude. They took their fees by cheque, or, when paid in cash, gave receipts for the full amount to their clients. They often paid more income tax than was due from them and had some of it refunded. Manzur was the only person I met in my life who never told a lie and took great pains to avoid hurting people’s feelings. In due course, he became a kind of litmus paper by which his friends tested their own integrity. When in doubt over a course of action, we could ask ourselves, ‘Will Manzur approve of this?’ Like me he was an agnostic.

What Manzur and I also shared in common was a love for

literature. In his case it was entirely Urdu poetry, to which he reopened my eyes. He knew the works of many poets and could recite by the hour. He also tried his hand at writing, but without much success. He was best at composing bawdy verse which he recited with great verve to his circle of male friends, although he was extremely proper when women were around.

We spent many vacations together, sometimes at Patiala, where my father-in-law Sir Teja Singh Malik was a minister; other times in Delhi or Mashobra with my parents. Our friendship became the talk of the town as instances of such close friendships between Sikhs and Muslims or between Hindus and Muslims were very rare.

What proved to be a turning point in my career was Mangat Rai's desire to score over others of our circle as a man of letters. He suggested that, instead of him alone reading his pieces to an admiring audience, everyone should read something he or she had written. Our first meeting was in his home, a portion he had rented on Warris Road. The theme suggested by him was 'I believe'. We were to write down our beliefs on the values of life. About ten short papers were read out. I put down my reasons for disbelief in God and religion, and talked about friendship, love, marriage, death, and theories of life thereafter. There was nothing very original in what I wrote but just as it came to me. My main achievement was that I emerged as a rival to the hitherto unrivalled Mangat Rai. To be fair to him, he was generous in his praise. The next day I received a note of appreciation from Wilfred and Muriel Smith. It was my first fan mail and did a lot to boost my morale. Perhaps there was a little more to me than I thought.

The literary circle became a weekly feature. We met in different homes by rotation. A lot of liquor (mostly Indian brew) was consumed as poems, short stories, and essays were read

and faithfully applauded by everyone. The two who contributed most were Justice G. D. Khosla and myself. Khosla was more anxious to establish himself as a writer than as a jurist. I had much less to do than any of the others. I used my visits to Sikh villages, from where my clients came, as background for my earlier stories. Mangat Rai's contributions as well as his attendance at our meetings began to dwindle. There were other reasons besides work for his absence.

Having come to the conclusion that he had little chance of wrecking my marriage as long as my wife's parents were alive, he began to cast around for a wife. The first to attract him was a very pretty girl, Lajwanti Rallia Ram, who belonged to a Nationalist Christian family. She was as fair as a Kashmiri Brahmin, large-eyed, tall, and slender. She got the top position in her MA English exam (her father happened to be Registrar of the University). I don't recall how they met, but since Mangat Rai was the most sought after bachelor in the Christian community, the Rallia Rams could not have had much trouble discovering him and getting their daughter to meet him. The two often met in my apartment when we were away at the club. They announced their engagement and the wedding day was fixed. Wedding cards were printed and sent out. Lajwanti had her household linen embossed with the initials LMR. A few days before the marriage was to take place in a local church, Mangat Rai called it off. Lajwanti was heartbroken. Almost on the rebound, she married Mohammed Yunus, a handsome Pathan who was active in the freedom movement. The marriage proved to be disastrous for both.

I could not make out why Mangat Rai had behaved the way he did towards Lajwanti. He had earlier got engaged to Indira Sarkar, younger sister of Professor K. M. Sarkar, and ditched her just as peremptorily when he got into the ICS. As soon as he was free of the second entanglement he resumed paying court

to my wife and coming over to see us almost every day. I did not resent his visits as my wife had become extremely possessive, jealous, and demanding of attention. Her preoccupation with Mangat Rai gave me relief.

A year or so later, Mangat Rai met another young Christian girl, Champa. She had also topped in the MA English exam when her father S. P. Singha was Registrar of the University. He was then in politics and had been elected to the Punjab Assembly from a Christian constituency. Champa was a very different kind of girl from Lajwanti. She was dusky, animated, and uninhibited. She was known to have had quite a few affairs. Mangat Rai was drawn to her because of her vivacity. Champa and her parents knew that our opinion mattered a great deal to Mangat Rai and paid us a courtesy call. I did not tell them that I did not think their daughter and Mangat Rai would make a good marriage; she was too hot-blooded for him. However, they got engaged. Champa took no chances with a prolonged engagement and the two were married in church. Though invited, we did not attend the wedding. Champa made a few half-hearted attempts to befriend us. We did not respond. She decided to drop us.

As I had foreseen, the marriage proved to be a misalliance. Mangat Rai resumed calling on us, and when we were away, writing to my wife regularly. However, his marriage went on the rocks in a more bizarre way than I had expected. One summer we were all together in Simla. The Mangat Rais were staying with his sister Sheila and her husband Arthur Lall in a house near the Lakkar Bazaar. We were, as usual, in my father's house in Mashobra. We cycled down to Simla every afternoon and spent the evenings strolling up and down the Mall with them. It was evident that Champa and Arthur were hitting it off very well. Arthur was not getting much out of his rather frigid wife and Mangat Rai was proving somewhat inadequate for Champa. Plans were made for a week's trekking into the interior. A party was



formed and porters hired. On the last day Mangat Rai backed out. So did his sister Sheila. Arthur and Champa had a week together in the Himalayan fastness, spending their nights in deserted dak bungalows. They made up for what they had missed in their marriages. They returned from the trek convinced that they were made for each other. Mangat Rai readily agreed to divorce his wife, Sheila, a little reluctantly, conceded Arthur's wish to be free of her. It did not quite turn out that way. When the Singhas heard of it, they came down with a heavy hand on their daughter. Champa asked her husband to forgive her. He did so as readily as he had agreed to divorce her. But for all practical purposes the marriage was over. So was the Lalls'. After having bullied his wife into helping Champa get her passport (he had been given a posting in London), Arthur begged Sheila to return to him; he threatened to commit suicide if she did not forgive and forget. The high drama was to continue in the lives of all four of them. I was at times a spectator, at others a part of the cast.

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My Lahore days were coming to an end. Almost from the day I had come to live there, war had been raging in Europe and the Far East. I had strong anti-fascist views and was convinced that Hitler, Mussolini, their European allies, and the Japanese had to be defeated before India could become free. Most Indians exulted in the victories of the Axis powers more out of spite for their English rulers than love for Nazis and Fascists. I wasn't quite sure of Japanese intentions after Subhas Chandra Bose took over command of the Indian National Army. He was too strong a man to be a puppet in anyone's hands. But even about him and his INA I had my doubts. My communist illusions were blown sky-high when Stalin made his pact with Hitler, and only partly restored when they went to war against each other. I did not approve of Gandhi's 'Quit India' Movement. I supported the



Muslim demand for a separate state in areas where they were in a majority, believing that India would continue to remain one country with two autonomous Muslim-majority states at either end. I did not share any of the Hindu-Sikh suspicions or animosity against Muslims.

Not many Indians believed that the British would willingly relinquish their Empire in India. They regarded the Cripps and Cabinet Missions as eye-wash. They did not know the English. Young British officers who did their war service in India were a new breed. They refused to join exclusively white clubs, went out of their way to befriend Indians, expressed regret over what some English rulers had done in India, and sympathised with the Congress-led freedom movement. One event which reassured me that independence was round the corner took place in the summer of 1946. I happened to be with my parents in Mashobra. I had to return to Lahore, so I took the evening railcar to Kalka. There was only one other Indian besides me in the car, the rest were British officers in uniform and English civilians. After a brief halt at Barog for dinner, we proceeded on our downhill journey. It was a beautiful full moon night. At a bend near Dharampur, a wheel of the car came off the rails. The driver told us to wait till he got to the next station to order a relief car to be sent up from Kalka. We sat among the pines on a hillside bathed in moonlight. The English were understandably nervous as some months earlier a railcar had been ambushed by two robbers who had shot six English passengers and then escaped without taking anything. It was suspected to be the handiwork of Indian terrorists. Somebody switched on the radio of the derailed car and tuned in to the BBC Overseas Service. Election results were being announced. The Labour Party had won a landslide victory and Clement Attlee was named Prime Minister of England. The English passengers heard the news in grave silence. The other Indian, whom I did not know, and I leapt up and embraced each other. We knew that with the Socialists in

power in England, independence for India was indeed round the corner.

I had no illusions about the Muslim-Hindu/Sikh social divide. Even in the High Court Bar Association and Library, Muslim lawyers occupied different corners of the lounge and the library from Hindus and Sikhs. There was a certain amount of superficial mixing at weddings and funerals, but this was only to keep up appearances. After the Muslim League resolution demanding Pakistan, the cleavage became wide and continued to grow wider. The demand for Pakistan assumed the proportions of an avalanche gathering force as it went along. Every other afternoon huge processions of Muslims marched down the Mall chanting in unison:

*'Pakistan ka naaraah kya?  
La illaha illallah'*

What is the slogan of Pakistan?

There is but one God. He is Allah.

An instance of how deep the poison had spread was the case in which I appeared as Manzur's junior. It concerned a Sikh widow of considerable wealth and beauty named Sardarni Prem Prakash Kaur. She had been married to the only son of a wealthy contractor of Ludhiana. Her husband was a debauchee. He contracted syphilis and died without consummating his marriage. The entire estate came to the young widow. One day, while holidaying in Simla, she happened to be having tea at Davico's. A young Muslim strolling down the Mall saw her sitting alone by the window. Their eyes met and her smile assured him that he would not be unwelcome. He joined her for tea. They became lovers. The young man was handsome, but the good-for-nothing son of a barber. He began to live off Prem Prakash Kaur. They

had two sons. Then Prem Prakash Kaur tired of her uncouth lover. Her cousin Gurnam Singh, as handsome as he was cultured, a Barrister-at-law with a large practice in Lyallpur (he was a close friend of Manzur Qadir) decided to rescue Prem Prakash from the clutches of the barber's son. Prem Prakash moved in with Gurnam. Her Muslim lover took her to court over the custody of the two boys. He claimed she had converted to Islam, married him by Islamic rites, and their boys were circumcised and given Muslim names. Besides marriage and custody of children, there were criminal cases of trespass and forcible seizure of property. As these cases moved from the lower courts to the appellate, the pattern became evident; if the presiding officer was Muslim, it went in favour of the barber's son; if Hindu or Sikh, in favour of the Sikh widow. I came in on the scene when the case of marriage and custody came up for hearing before Donald Falshaw, then a District and Sessions Judge. I was engaged in order to give the case a non-communal flavour, as I was known to be friendly with Donald and his wife Joan.

But for the partition of India in August 1947, the case might still be going on. Prem Prakash Kaur and all her property were in East Punjab, which came to India. The barber's son was left in Pakistan. Gurnam migrated to East Punjab, became its Chief Minister, and resumed his liaison with Prem Prakash. He was later appointed Indian High Commissioner to Australia. A few days thereafter, returning home to collect his belongings, he was killed in an air crash.

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The atmosphere became so charged with hate that it needed only a spark to set the Punjab ablaze. The year-long Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta led to the massacre of Muslims in Bihar, then to massacres of Hindus in Noakhali in East Bengal. Then Muslims of the NWFP raided and scattered Sikh and Hindu

villagers and slew as many as they could lay their hands on. Others fled their homes to safety in Lahore, Amritsar, and East Punjab.

While the killings of Hindus and Sikhs went on in the NWFP, I happened to go to Abbottabad to appear as defence counsel in a murder case involving two branches of a Hindu family. The case was finished in one day. The next morning, instead of driving down to Taxila to catch my train, I decided to walk the distance of about eight to ten miles. It was balmy weather. I found the road absolutely deserted. Even villages through which I passed showed no signs of life. Men and women peeped out of their doorways to see me stride along. It was eerie. A couple of miles short of Taxila a lorry-load of Sikh soldiers pulled up beside me. A young Captain spoke harshly to me, 'Sardarji, are you out of your senses? They've killed every Sikh in these villages and you are out as if on an evening stroll. Get in.'

I obeyed and was dropped off at Taxila station. The railway station was also deserted except for the Station Master and a couple of ticket collectors. I saw the train I was to board come along and stop at the outer signal. I heard some shouting but could not make out what it was about. When the train pulled up on the platform, I got into a first class compartment. I was the only passenger. I bolted the door from the inside. There was no sign of life at any of the stations we passed through. When I got off the train at Lahore, the platform was deserted. There was not a porter in sight. Manzur Qadir had come to fetch me. He told me that communal riots had broken out in Lahore. The next morning I learnt from the papers that a train, the one on which I had travelled, had been held up at a signal near Taxila and all Sikh passengers had been dragged out and murdered.

A few days later, it was my turn to pick up Manzur Qadir. He had gone to do a case at Gujranwala. On his way back, when



his train stopped at Badami Bagh, it was attacked by a Muslim mob and its Sikh passengers hauled out and hacked to death. He had seen the massacre with his own eyes. He looked bloodless and was still unsteady on his legs.

The last time I left Lahore before being forced to quit was to defend three men charged with robbery and murder in the court of the Sessions Judge at Gujranwala. Two of the accused had been members of the INA; I was engaged by an organisation set up to defend them. This was not a political crime but a case of homicide. The men had boarded the night train from Lahore to Rawalpindi and forced their way into a first-class coupe occupied by two young English Army nurses. The girls offered resistance; one of them bit the man who tried to pull her down from the upper berth. The other fought back with her hands. The men threw her out of the fast-moving train. When the train stopped at Gujranwala, the three robbers disappeared in the darkness. The surviving girl ran up the platform screaming hysterically. Railway police came on the scene. They found the body of the other English girl lying along the track. The survivor was taken to Gujranwala hospital and treated for shock. The three accused were arrested the next day. They were Sikhs. They had woken up a barber at night and had him cut off their long hair and beards to escape detection. The surviving English girl was flown to England for treatment and was brought back after some months when the prosecution was ready to present its case. It felt it had a water-tight case based on the testimony of the barber and the recovery of stolen goods including a handbag with a compact, lipstick, comb, and other items of a lady's make-up from the accused. When I arrived in the Sessions Court it was clear that the Sessions Judge, a Muslim, had made up his mind to hang the three men. I pinned my hopes on the honesty of the English girl. I did not bother to cross-examine the barber at any length, nor the police over the recoveries made from the accused; village barbers could be made to say whatever the police



wanted them to say; and planting incriminating articles on innocent people was a common practice. I concentrated entirely on the English girl. She was still in a state of shock and broke down many times while narrating the incidents of the fateful train journey. As I stood up to cross-examine her, the judge said to me very firmly: 'Be brief! She has been through a lot. I will not allow you to harass her.'

I protested equally firmly that I had to do my duty, or be allowed to withdraw from the case. He relented and allowed me to proceed. I asked the girl whether she could tell the difference between one Sikh and another if they happened to be of roughly the same age. She admitted that she could not. How then could she be sure if these were the three men who had robbed them, which one she had bitten, and which one threw her companion out of the train? She admitted that she could not be sure but these men had been arrested by the police and she had been asked to identify them. Did she know that the accused, who had had themselves shaved, had been forced by the police to grow their beards before she was asked to identify them? No, she was not aware of that. The identification parade had been a very shoddy affair. Of the twelve men lined up before her, only three were bearded Sikhs; she had pointed them out. She readily admitted that if all of them had been bearded and turbanned she would have found it very difficult to spot the guilty. She also admitted that a police officer had offered to help her identify the accused, but she had refused his offer. I asked her to look at the three accused in handcuffs in the dock and point out the one she had bitten and the two who had thrown her companion out of the compartment. She would not look at the accused men. The prosecution counsel and the Judge tried to shout me down. I stood my ground and insisted that my question be put on record before the judge decided to rule it out. The question was recorded. The judge had second thoughts about ruling it out and very gently asked the witness if she would care to answer

it. The girl broke down crying, 'No, no, no. I don't want to look at these bloody villains. Please let me go.' All this was recorded and the girl was helped out of the court room by two British soldiers. I made my defence speech to a very irate judge who looked as if he would have liked to hang me. I left for Lahore, and a few days later for Kasauli. I learned later that the Sessions Judge had acquitted all the three accused for lack of convincing evidence. I had little doubt in my mind that the three men I had got scot free were guilty of robbery and murder. That was the sort of thing that nauseated me about the legal profession. It had very little to do with justice.

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Suddenly riots broke out in Lahore. They were sparked off by the Sikh leader Master Tara Singh making a melodramatic gesture outside the Punjab Legislative Assembly building. Inside the Chamber, the Chief Minister, Khizar Hayat Tiwana, had succumbed to pressure from the Muslim League and resigned. It was now clear that the Muslims of the Punjab had also opted for Pakistan. As soon as the session was over, Master Tara Singh drew his *kirpan* out of its sheath and yelled 'Pakistan murdabad' (death to Pakistan). It was like hurling a lighted matchstick into a room full of explosive gas. Communal riots broke out all over the province. Muslims had the upper hand in the killings. They were in the majority, better organised and better motivated than Hindus or Sikhs. The Punjab police was largely Muslim and shamelessly prejudiced in favour of their co-religionists. The only organised group to offer resistance to Muslim gangs was the RSS, but all it could do was to explode a few bombs, killing perhaps one or two people. Then it disappeared from the scene. Urban Sikhs were a pathetic lot. They boasted of their martial prowess (they had none) and waved long *kirpans* they had never wielded before.

One day a Bihari working at a petrol station which I used was knifed to death in broad daylight by two Muslim boys aged eleven and twelve. Unsuspecting Sikhs, riding bicycles, were toppled over by ropes stretched across roads being suddenly raised from either side, and stabbed. Our nights were disturbed by sudden outbursts of cries of 'Allah-o-Akbar' from one side replied to by 'Sat Sri Akal' and 'Har Har Mahadev' from the other. Muslims had more confidence. They would come close to Hindu and Sikh localities and shout '*Hoshiyaar! Shikar ka hai intezaar!*' (Beware, we await our quarry.)

Whatever little resistance Hindus and Sikhs put up against Muslim goondaism collapsed one hot afternoon in June 1947. We heard no sounds of gunfire or yelling; we saw only black clouds of smoke billowing out of the city. The entirely Hindu *mohalla* of Shahalmi had been set on fire. Hindus and Sikhs began to leave Lahore, taking whatever they could with them. A few days later, they were forced out without being allowed to take anything. Their homes and belongings were taken over by their Muslim neighbours.

I did not know how long I would be able to stay on in Lahore. I had sent my two small children to their maternal grandparents in Kasauli. My next-door neighbours on either side proclaimed their religious identity on their walls; a large cross on the one side to indicate they were Christians; on the other, big letters in Urdu stating *Parsi ka Makaan* (this is a Parsi home). Close by lived Justice Taja Singh. He had often exhorted me and other Sikhs to stick it out. One morning early in August when I drove up to his house, I found it padlocked. The chowkidar told me that his master had left for Delhi. It was my college friend from London days, C. H. Everette, then head of the CID, who advised me to leave Lahore for a few days till the situation returned to normal. 'Leave your home and things in the care of some Muslim friend,' he advised. Manzur was at the time doing

some case in Simla. I rang him up and we arranged to meet at Dharampur on the Kalka-Simla road, near where the road to Kasauli branches off. The following night my wife and I and our Hindu cook were escorted by a posse of Baloch policemen provided by Everette to the railway station. We left our young Sikh servant, Dalip Singh, in charge of our house till the Qadirs moved in to look after it. We arrived next morning at Kalka without any untoward incident. I had sent my car ahead to meet us there. We drove up to Dharampur. A few minutes later, Manzur arrived by taxi from Simla. He told me that some Kashmiri Muslim labourers had been stabbed in Simla and Muslims were pulling out of Himachal hill resorts. I handed him the keys of my house. We embraced each other. I promised to return as soon as things were more settled.

We spent some days at Kasauli. By then the mass exodus of Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan and Muslims from East Punjab had begun. There were gory tales of attacks on trains and road convoys in which thousands were massacred in cold blood. Sikhs who had taken a terrible beating in West Punjab were out seeking bloody revenge on innocent Muslims of East Punjab, mopping up one Muslim village after another. I decided to run the gauntlet and get to Delhi. I had to make up my mind about what to do. I left my wife and children at Kasauli. I took a motor mechanic with me in the event of the car giving trouble. Some miles beyond Kalka I discovered that petrol stations along the road were closed. I returned to Kalka to fill up the tank and take a spare can of petrol. On the way I found our servant Dalip Singh walking along the road. He told me that Muslim mobs had come to the house. The Qadirs and their servants had hidden him in an attic for several days. Manzur had removed my name from the gate and put up his own in its place. However, word had leaked out that a Sikh was being given shelter and goondas wanted to search the house. Manzur was able to get the police just in time to prevent them breaking in. That night he put



Dalip Singh in the boot of his car and drove him to the new Indo-Pak border. He gave him money and instructed him to board a train going from Amritsar to Kalka. That is how he came to be there. Not having heard of Kasauli, the fellow had taken the road to Delhi hoping to catch a bus somewhere on the way.

I put Dalip Singh in the car, took enough petrol to get us to Delhi, and proceeded on my way. There was not a soul on the road, no sign of life in any of the towns or villages through which we passed. It was only after I had passed Karnal, some sixty miles short of Delhi, that I saw a jeep coming towards me. I pulled up. So did the jeep, about a hundred yards from me. I took out my pistol and waited. After an agonising five minutes of staring at the jeep, I noticed that its occupants were Sikhs. Two men stepped out on the road with rifles in their hands. I felt reassured and drove up to the jeep. I asked them if it was safe to proceed to Delhi. 'Quite safe,' they assured me. 'We have killed the lot in villages along the road.' They used the word *soor* (pig) for Muslims. It churned my stomach. This was no place to argue with them.

I arrived safely in Delhi, a few days before India was to be declared independent. I had my father's home to go to. Hundreds of thousands of others who like me had fled Pakistan had nowhere to go. Some were housed in refugee camps; others occupied old monuments, railway station platforms, or verandas outside shops and offices, or made their homes on pavements.

The magnitude of the tragedy that had taken place was temporarily drowned in the euphoria of the Independence to come. It was like a person who feels no hurt when his arm or leg is suddenly cut off: the pain comes after some time.

On the night of August 14, I joined the stream of humanity moving towards Parliament House. With me was my wife's cousin,



Harji Malik. We managed to get to the Parliament by 11 p.m. The throng was immense disciplined, and full of enthusiasm. Periodically it burst into cries of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai' and 'Inquilab zindabad. A minute before the midnight hour a hush of silence spread over the crowd. The voice of Sucheta Kripalam singing 'Bande Mataram' came over the loud-speakers. I was followed by Pandit Nehru making his memorable speech: 'Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny...Now comes the time to redeem that pledge...' and so on. As the speech ended, the crowd burst into cheers and yelling of slogans. We embraced strangers and congratulated each other for having gained our freedom. We did not get home till after 2 a.m.

I was up early to be able to get to the Red Fort to see the Union Jack come down and the Indian tricolour go up. Once again the whole route was crowded with people going on foot. Lord and Lady Mountbatten drove up in their six-horsed Viceregal carriage. The horses were unharnessed. The people decided to pull the carriage with their own hands. Many British officers were picked up and carried by the crowd on their shoulders. Almost overnight the much hated English had become the Indians' most-loved foreigners.

I stood about fifty yards away from the ramparts of the Red Fort. I heard the buglers sound the 'Last Post' as Lord Mountbatten lowered the Union Jack. I heard the band play the National Anthem 'Jana Gana Mana' as Pandit Nehru hoisted the Indian tricolour. I heard the canons roar to salute the new President of the Republic. I heard all but saw very little because tears of joy blurred my vision. And my heart was full of pride.

# Through Smoking Towns

Prakash Tandon

While the fading paper flags of the independence celebrations were still waving, the horror of partition broke on us suddenly one day when a postcard arrived from Uncle Dwarka Prashad. It contained this single line.

With my younger brother, who was also settled in Bombay, I had discounted the first rumours, while government tried to tone down the press hand-outs. No one wanted to spoil the music of freedom still in the air. But every day the news became graver, and uncle's postcard told us that the end had come.

In June 1947, when partition was announced, most Hindus and Sikhs had accepted it fatalistically. 'We have lived under the Muslims before, then under the Sikhs and the British, and if we are now back under Muslim rule, so what? We shall manage somehow, as we have managed before. Nowadays governments are different, they give you some rights, they have to listen to the people!' Fortified by such arguments, people decided to stay where they were and face the change.

In July things began to look menacing, but few thought of leaving. There were sporadic attacks on Hindus and Sikhs, but they were mostly looked upon as signs of another riot. The turn had come of the Punjab, where people during the war years had prided themselves on living in peace while the rest of the country shook with the ugly outburst of Hindu-Muslim violence. As things worsened, father wrote to say that he considered it pointless to leave the house. Even if there was real trouble he would be safe, because he had so many Muslim friends and neighbours. Who would want to harm an old man, semi-paralysed by a stroke? Besides, he was so comfortable with his faithful

Chattar Singh, who was on such good terms with everybody, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike, to look after him.

In August law and order of ninety years came to an end. Elementary civil protection, taken for granted the week before, ceased. Chatter Singh felt that his own family would prove a burden if he suddenly had to leave; and to take care of father would be an added problem. So he appealed frantically to our neighbours to persuade father to leave for a while, till things improved. He was going to move his wife and children to the safety of Amritsar, now across the border. My older brother wired from Bihar that father must leave and reluctantly he agreed, where upon Chatter Singh hurriedly packed him off. Many others were sending their women and children and old people away. Like everyone else, father thought he was only going for a short time, till the riots subsided.

Uncle Dwarka Prashad had remarried some years after Savitri's death and had permanently settled in Gujrat. My second aunt was a very handsome woman in her youth, with long brown hair and a melodious voice. After quite a struggle, she had slowly managed to tame uncle. He worked hard, and with his natural ability he soon prospered. He built his own house outside the city wall, conveniently near the law courts, where he had built up a lucrative practice. She gave him two sons and two daughters. The eldest, a girl, urged by my father, had studied medicine. She then married a dentist, and they were both settled in practice in Amritsar. The elder boy had just finished his law studies at Lahore, while the younger children were still at school.

Uncle had always been tough and fearless, and easily persuaded to fight. He had mellowed with the years as he became an elder of the *biradari*, a senior member of the bar and influential in municipal affairs. He was greatly respected by all communities, and most of his practice came from Muslim litigants

in the district. Everyone assured him that he could safely stay, no one would touch him and his family. He wanted to believe in their assurances even as he saw the trickle of exodus gather volume. These others thought it wise to go away for a while; they would all return when everything was calm again. The thought that this was going away forever never crossed anybody's mind. A calamity might cause temporary uprooting, but afterwards you came back to what had always been your home.

One day, a train crammed with two thousand refugees came from the more predominantly Muslim areas of Jhelum and beyond. At Gujrat station the train was stopped, and Muslims from the neighbourhood, excited by the news of violence in East Punjab, began to attack and loot. There was indescribable carnage. Several hours later the train moved on, filled with a bloody mess of corpses, without a soul alive. At Amritsar, when the train with its load of dead arrived, they took revenge on a trainload of Muslim refugees. There was also great killing at Sheikhpura, and on the other side in Jalandhar. The whole of Punjab was in conflagration. Six million Hindus and Sikhs from West Punjab began to move in one dense mass towards safety, and from the east of the border a similar mass movement was underway in the opposite direction.

Muslim friends came to uncle late one night and said with tears in their eyes that they were unable to offer him protection any longer. The family must move at once, before dawn! Dwarka Prashad now saw it only too well that they had to leave, not for a few days, but for ever. He had in fact been expecting it since the day of the massacre at the station, but the problem had been how to get out; and it was then that he had sent the postcard.

His friends rushed to an Indian military evacuation convoy that had arrived the same evening, and brought a truck. They



heaved a sigh of relief as uncle and his family, with two suitcases and a few blankets, drove away. On the Grand Trunk Road their truck joined an unending line of military and civil trucks and cars, bullock carts and tongas, people on horseback, and carried on shoulders. In its long history of over a thousand years this road had never seen such a migration.

As dawn was breaking, they caught the last view of Gujrat through the shisham trees by the road; a view they had so often seen when going to the river Chenab at Besakhi. They looked at the weathered dark brown mass of the city rising as a flat-top cone. My aunt's ancestral house was in the highest *mohalla* inside the fortress, and she could see almost the spot from where twenty-seven years ago her palanquin had descended the narrow lanes to our old house inside the Kalri Gate. She wondered what would happen to her house, to her cupboards and trunks full of clothes, linen and utensils, and above all to the buffalo and its calf that she had left tied in the yard. She suspected that in a few hours their home would be swept bare, but she was too numbed to care. Through smoking towns and charred villages the convoy moved like a long dark snake. At one time over the narrow bridge of the Bullokee headworks, where I was born, there was a convoy of over two million people seeking its way out. Through Kharian, Wazirabad, Gujranwala, Emnabad, Gakhar, it heaved forward, swelled by other convoys joining it from the side roads. After delays, alarms and rumours of attack, it reached the Ravi and crossed into Lahore. They were put up at uncle's old DAV College, which had become a vast temporary camp. From here they moved on in smaller convoys, and uncle's party eventually arrived at the new frontier post of Wagah, a tiny hamlet which was now in the limelight as a scene of dramatic activity. As the truck passed the barrier into 'India', they looked back at Pakistan, their homeland which did not want them.



# An Unforgettable August

Som Anand

During my school days, August had always been a month of new prospects. It was a time when the leisure and freedom of summer vacations neared their end. We all made hectic efforts to complete the homework set us by our stern teachers. It was a period of excitement too, for the reopening of classes meant meeting our classmates again, hearing their adventures and having a lot of fun.

But in 1947, all this excitement evaporated. In its place came fear of the approaching holocaust. The schools had been closed since March and there were no prospects of classes starting again. For me there was no homework and no meetings with my friends. Berinder had gone to Jalandhar with his aunt. Father came home from the office every evening with a sullen face. He was a man who followed his daily routine religiously; but though the routine remained, the zest had vanished. As the situation worsened, most of his friends and neighbours left the city. With hardly any one to talk to, the before-dinner sessions of chit-chat came to an end. In his bank office too, there was little to be done, for in the disturbed conditions that prevailed, few went to banks to operate their accounts. Lahore was rife with all sorts of rumours but father never told me anything. My only source of information was our chauffeur, Gulzara Singh, who would exaggerate everything he heard or witnessed. Hearing the grisly stories of killing and arson, a gnawing fear, which I had never felt before, possessed me. Every evening I had dinner with father without even exchanging a single word. His silence and a strange expression of sorrow stamped on his countenance disconcerted me greatly. I tossed in my bed at night, wondering what independence would bring for us.

Model Town, fortunately, was not touched by the massacres in the city. There were several Muslim villages near Model Town and the nearest was not more than a mile from our house. It was named Jeun Hana. Strangely enough, no one ever felt any danger from the Gujjars of that village. I cannot say what prevented them from coming to loot our locality of affluent people. One probable reason was that they got much of their business from the inhabitants of Model Town. Our milkman Imam Din, continued to visit us twice a day with his usual supplies. His only regret was that with so many people leaving the place, the number of customers had gone down considerably. Like other Muslims of the area, Imam din was tall, robust and without education. He had voted for the Muslim League but he did not understand politics. He was a mild and friendly man and I could not imagine him coming to Model Town bent on killing any one. Another reason why the people of Imam din's village remained immune to the communal frenzy was that no one came there to instigate it. Jeun Hana was far away from the city, and the organised groups were too busy in their own localities to care for such a far-flung area. In any case we escaped the orgy of the riots except the last incident which forced us to leave.

During those days, my going to the city was strictly prohibited and with nothing to occupy my days, I used to roam aimlessly on the roads. It saddened me to see people packing up or leaving with their luggage in cars, trucks or tongas. The sight of empty houses with cattle grazing on their lawns depressed me even more. Model Town was fast becoming a deserted place—shops closed, gates locked and no one to talk to—exactly like a ghost town in a story book. Then for several nights from the roof of our house, I saw the glow of that big fire which had burnt down the Shahalami Gate area in the city. It horrified me and one day I timidly suggested to my father that we should also go to Delhi, at least for some days. But as I had

expected, he brusquely rejected the idea saying, "All these fools will be coming back after a few months."

August had entered its second week. Weary of the boredom, father decided to go away at last, but only for a few days. The choice fell on Kapurthala, the town where his old friend Aziz Bakhsh lived. On the 12th evening, Gulzara Singh was asked to get ready to leave the next morning. The prospect of an outing after so many weeks of immobility excited me. When we started out the next day, I was surprised to see that our chauffeur's wife and child were also accompanying us. Little did I realise at that time how disturbed at heart Gulzara Singh was feeling. Being a Sikh, his life was in greater danger than ours. It did not strike me then that if we were trapped by the fury of the mob, he would be the first target of attack. But the drive to Kapurthala proved uneventful. It rained all the way and in that heavy downpour the roads were clear of the threatening mobs which he feared. When at noon we reached the beautiful town of Kapurthala, Gulzara Singh heaved a sigh of relief. "We're safe," he said with a wry smile on his face.

In the middle of August, Kapurthala was peaceful. The riots had yet to start in that princely state with its Muslim majority and Sikh ruler. Our first two days there were spent without anxiety. The third day was August 15, the dawn of India's freedom. In the morning I went to see the flag hoisting ceremony with our host's children. It was a drab function and the few hundred who had gathered there did not seem too enthusiastic. One reason for this could have been that at that time the people of Punjab were in the grip of a fever, the fever of communal hatred, which overshadowed all other feelings. Seeing the national flag going up the mast for the first time, my thoughts went back to our home in Model Town, my school and my friends and the life I had spent there which at that moment

seemed to be a dream. I returned from the function depressed and dejected.

By evening it became clear that going back to Lahore would not be easy. The bazaar rumours, which Gulzara Singh related to me, were really disconcerting. He said that large-scale killings had taken place at the Lahore railway station and that people were pouring into Amritsar from Lahore. Such stories were very disquieting; and Aziz Bakhsh and his family now started pleading with father to give up the idea of returning to Lahore. But my father rejected this proposal firmly.

The question now was who would drive the car back to Lahore. To take Gulzara Singh with us would mean that he would be easily identified as a non-Muslim. But father was adamant on this point too. Two days were spent in discussing various proposals. Then on the 17th evening, we heard on the radio of the Boundary Commission's award. Giving details of India's frontier through the Punjab, the announcement referred to a canal and to the village of Wagah. We had never heard of Wagah before. It was all confusing to me but in the end we clearly understood that Lahore was to be on the other side. So whatever little hope that was left had now gone. Our fate had been sealed and to me the future looked bleak. Lahore was now in another country and even if we succeeded in getting back, it was not certain how long circumstances would allow us to stay.

The next evening father summoned his chauffeur to announce that we would be leaving early next morning. For a few moments Gulzara Singh was silent. From his face I could guess the mental agony he was passing through. Gulzara Singh had been with us for the last twenty years and he had become almost a member of the family. I had never heard him say "No" to father. Now he was caught in a dilemma. Driving to Lahore



when the city was running with blood was like entering the den of a hungry lion. Yet he did not have the heart to refuse. In his anxiety to get back home as soon as he could, father had overlooked the danger of taking a turbaned Sikh along and Gulzara Singh had become such an integral part of our household that it had never occurred to him that he would need a new chauffeur in a Lahore which was no more part of India.

Gulzara Singh stood there silent and grim, not knowing how to express what he felt. Then he suddenly took off his turban and placed it at father's feet. "Lalaji", he said in a choked voice, "all my youth has been spent in your service; you are like a father to me. But they do not spare any Sikh in Lahore these days. I am sure to be caught and killed. Your life too will be in danger. If you want me to die, kill me here." Father was silent. He understood the gravity of the situation. At that moment, Aziz Bakhsh suggested that one of his cousins (I forget his name), could drive the car instead of Gulzara Singh. After some hesitation this proposal was accepted and early next morning we were ready to go. The whole of Aziz Bakhsh's family came out on to the road to say "Khuda Hafiz" to us. Gulzara Singh too was there with tears in his eyes. The car started and we felt a little relief from the tension. For a moment it seemed to me that it was the same old journey. But the next moment my eyes saw the new man at the steering wheel. Gulzara Singh's departure was our first loss, and much more was to follow.

We drove fast and at that early hour the Grand Trunk Road was empty of traffic. Our new companion was given a Gandhi cap to wear and it was decided that it would be replaced by a Jinnah cap after we crossed into Pakistan. The sun rose high and we left India's border town of Attari well behind us; but the border was nowhere to be seen. After a drive of about fifteen or twenty minutes from the border town, we crossed a canal and



father observed that the frontier would lie somewhere near this place. "So we have crossed the dividing line", I thought and felt a pang in my heart. But there was yet nothing to indicate the international border. My eyes were looking around to see if there were any signs of the new-born country. There were only vast, empty stretches of land on both sides of the road. Caravans of uprooted people had yet to pass through this unhappy land. Then just after we crossed into Pakistan, two men were seen standing on the road. As the car neared them they raised their hands and signalled us to stop. The car screeched to a halt. I was a little scared to see hefty villagers standing on the lonely road with dagger-like weapons in their hands. They too seemed to be in a panic. One of them said: "Sir, the village next to ours in district Amritsar was attacked last night by the Sikhs. They say that today it is the turn of our village. Will you be kind enough to take us to Shalamar Bagh? We want to get a truck to take our families somewhere safe." Before father could say anything, the driver signalled them to get in. They got into the front seat and the car started off again. On the way they said little except to give more details of the attack on the village next to theirs. Listening to their tale of woe, I felt for the first time that the riots were really spreading fast in the Punjab. After they got out of the car near the Shalamar Bagh, our new driver explained that it would have been dangerous to refuse these people a lift. They were armed and desperate so anything could have happened if we had refused. Father agreed with him and we decided to take the shortest possible route to Model Town. This meant avoiding the congested areas of Lahore. Though calm seemed to prevail, we were not sure what was happening in the city. Passing through the outskirts, I saw Pakistani flags fluttering on the housetops. The sight was not altogether unfamiliar to my eyes. I had seen the League's green banner several times in the Muslim localities of Lahore. But that was the first time that the star and crescent standard, with a white

band at the end, was seen hoisted on the buildings. The indication was clear. We were in Pakistan and Lahore was part of it. India's partition had become an established fact. My mind went back to the discussions our elders used to have on the future prospects. Even two years ago, no one had imagined that independence and partition would come with such anarchy and bloodshed.

We reached home at noon to find our cook in a very sullen mood. He had probably given up hope of our coming back. The house had been left in his charge with strict instructions that he was not to leave it. After a few days when the riots had grown in intensity, he naturally felt that we might not return, and it became difficult then for him to keep his vigil. The neighbours had to persuade him to stay at his post. By that time, only one non-Muslim family was left in our area. Like my father, Mr. Bhatia had also been hoping that events would take a turn for the better. But unlike us, they were a large family and when we left for Kapurthala, all of them felt as if they were stranded passengers on a sinking ship. Our return revived their hopes. That afternoon when I entered Mr. Bhatia's house, there was a cry of joy. The younger ones showed a brave face and taunted me, "You coward, where did you go?" To celebrate the occasion, a game of cards was arranged at once. In those listless days this was our favourite pastime to ward off worry and fear. But I was to lose their company very soon. Before long, Mr. Bhatia decided to leave Lahore for some place in East Punjab. There was no sign that the university would open in the near future (he was a lecturer in the Forman Christian College) and the situation was becoming more dangerous for non-Muslims every day. Thus, within a fortnight, the Bhatias left in a military truck for Ferozepur. Bidding them goodbye proved to be really painful for me and father. They had drawn nearer to us in the days of strain and their continued stay gave me the hope that one day everything would be the same again. At a time when

the neighbourhood was full of unfamiliar faces, the company of Mr. Bhatia's family provided the much needed moral support to both of us. But their house was not left vacant. Mr. Ata Muhammad, a family friend of the Bhatias, was asked to stay there until they returned. (Even at that stage the hope of coming back to Lahore was not completely lost.) He was a pleasant young man, soft spoken and mild mannered. I soon established a friendship with him. Later on this friendship was instrumental in saving my life.

With Mr. Bhatia's departure, only one non-Muslim was left in our area. Sardar Kartar Singh was an old man, emotionally tied to his house, buffalo and other worldly belongings. The rest of his family had gone and he was living alone, keeping watch on his property and hoping for better times to come. His position was that of a lonely soldier who keeps to his post, ready to face a massive attack. I had always thought him a crazy old man, but his lonely existence evoked a feeling of pity in my mind. Father also thought he would be better off living with his children in East Punjab. But we had never imagined that there was any danger to his life. Yet in the end the poor man did fall victim to the frenzy of a band of marauders. Before describing this tragic drama, which involved all of us, I must relate how Aziz Bakhsh and his family were brought from Kapurthala. The riots spread in East Punjab with much greater fury after partition. The princely state of Kapurthala was also engulfed. Aziz Bakhsh's cousin, our new driver, was greatly perturbed to hear this. Father was getting frantic letters from Kapurthala asking him to rescue them from the hell in which they were trapped. The state's capital was so far free from bloodshed but there could be no guarantee that it would remain so. In the end the young man decided to go there himself and see what could be done to bring the family to Lahore. He set out with a lot of encouragement from all of us. But the next day

he was back in our kitchen, weeping bitterly. He had never reached Kapurthala. At Jalandhar he had decided to walk to his town, a distance of 7 miles, as there was no transport available in those disturbed days. But hardly had he gone two or three miles when a ghastly scene made him stop and turn back. Near the railway line, dead bodies were lying scattered over a large area. It was apparent that a caravan of people had been massacred there. So great was the slaughter that a nearby rivulet's water had turned pink with blood and human limbs could be seen floating in it. He learnt that a train carrying Muslims from Kapurthala to Pakistan had been stopped at that spot the previous night and a horde of villagers had fallen upon their hapless victims. The killing and looting which followed had lasted several hours. And in the early hours of the morning this trainload of dead and half-dead people reached Jalandhar. Fearing that worse might be happening in Kapurthala town, he turned back and got back to Lahore without contacting his relatives.

It was clear from this account that the situation had become grave. Though it was very unlikely that Aziz Bakhsh had boarded the ill-fated train, the problem of rescuing him from the beleaguered town of Kapurthala had become much more difficult. But there was no time to lose, and something had to be done immediately. Father could think of nothing else than to make a dash to Kapurthala in his car and bring his friend's family to Lahore. At that time East Punjab was completely in the grip of rioters and there was great risk involved in the plan. It meant jumping into a cauldron. Though I tried to dissuade him, he was determined to go. It was decided that I would not accompany him because my presence could not be of any help. I was very keen to go and stay for some days with Berinder who was in Jalandhar at that time. But this was not thought advisable and my hopes of getting out of that lonely and listless atmosphere were dashed. In those days even going out of the house was



discouraged, and it seemed to me that the boredom of staying indoors all the time would never end.

Father left for Kapurthala early in the morning. His only escort was Mr. B.P.L. Bedi and the Communist leader's hefty frame, composure and gift of oratory proved to be real assets in that situation. Moreover, Mr. Bedi was well-acquainted with Kapurthala and its inhabitants. He had spent many years there with his maternal uncle, Dewan Harnam Dass, who was well-connected and an influential dignitary of the town. In view of this background, there could be no one more suitable to provide moral support for father on that occasion. The plan was to reach Kapurthala and then make arrangements for moving the family to Lahore. I thought this would take several days, but to my great surprise, the big black limousine entered our gate after dusk the same night. "What's happened?", I wondered. The next moment the car stopped and Mr. Bedi stepped down followed by father, tired and cheerful. Then a host of children and women got out. All of them were packed in the car like chicks in a chicken-coop. It was really a great relief to see Aziz Bakhsh's family safe in Lahore.

What I heard later about the journey proved to me how courage eases a difficult job. The car moved towards Kapurthala at a good speed. At several places, there were mobs of rioters blocking the road. (There were also heaps of dead bodies on both sides of the road — unfortunate people who had fallen victim to rioters.) But seeing a big limousine running at that speed, they made way for it, probably under the impression that a government dignitary was travelling in it. The rioters were in fact waiting for the refugee caravans. At Kapurthala it was decided that Aziz Bakhsh's family should come out through the main door of Dewan Harnam Dass's house onto the main road to get into the car. This was done so that it would not be



obvious that a Muslim family was leaving with its valuables. But as the women and children trooped out with small bundles in their hands, a group of passers-by collected around the car. In a few minutes it became a crowd, and when the news got around, it turned into a menacing mob. The situation could have become dangerous but for Mr. Bedi's deft handling. His political training, knowledge of the art of public speaking and crowd psychology came in handy at that moment. He addressed the young men of Kapurthala in his characteristic Punjabi idiom, told them of his relationship with Dewan Harnam Dass, the days of his boyhood in the town, the Kapuria halwai's delicious sweets which he had consumed in abundance and Kapurthala's fame as a place of communal amity. This short speech had the desired effect on the crowd.

### **Then Came the Pathans**

Our house was now full of people, victims of India's partition. The women and children were very depressed because the unfamiliar surroundings made them miss their own town. As for me, the boredom of empty, listless days had gone; now there was plenty of activity, but seeing so many unhappy faces around, gave me little consolation. Meanwhile, I had interesting company in the person of Pran, a distant relation who had come to Lahore from Delhi to collect his father's baggage. (He is now Dr. G.P. Talwar of the All-India Institute of Medical Science.) The stories he told me of large-scale rioting in East Punjab were really nightmarish. Once, while walking in the countryside, he was caught by a group of villagers who mistook him for a Muslim. All his arguments to convince them that he was a Hindu were of little use, and they were bent upon killing him until in the end he took down his trousers to prove that he was a Hindu. Later I heard innumerable stories of people who were killed because of mistaken identity. A somewhat different story was one I heard from Berinder about Dr. Zakir Husain's escape at Jalandhar railway station.

Our escape in Model Town was equally providential. The month of September was in its fourth week. It was a quiet and listless Sunday and we were not expecting any change in the day's routine. At about noon, Mr. B.P.L. Bedi came to our house. He asked father to accompany him to the city for some purpose. After a little discussion, both of them left in the car. Not knowing how to fill our empty hours, Pran and I went to have a chat with Atta Muhammad. He was a real gentleman and seemed to have no communal prejudices, a rare quality in that hate-infested atmosphere. We had been sitting there for the better part of an hour when suddenly a shot was heard from the direction of our house. I was too engrossed in the conversation to pay any attention to it but Mr. Atta Muhammad immediately sent his servant to see what had happened. He returned after some time and whispered something to him. Our host immediately jumped up telling us to come in from the verandah into his sitting room. "What has happened?", I asked in surprise. "Your house has been attacked," he replied with anxiety and panic writ large on his face. For me this was incredible. There had been no person in Model Town who had taken part in the rioting; even during the worst days the place had remained peaceful.

But now there was no time to waste. Something had to be done to get help. Pran said that he would go to the Club House to fetch Gorkha soldiers stationed there. He rushed out and I was left alone with Mr. Atta Muhammad in his sitting room. In a few minutes his wife came in and tried to assure me that my life was not in danger in their house. But I had still not realised the gravity of the situation. After about half an hour, we heard the sound of an army truck passing that way. "Now you can go", Mr. Atta Muhammad said, feeling somewhat relieved. I went out and he accompanied me to the turning where our lane led off from the road. There he said goodbye to me and went back to his own house. I could see the army truck standing in front of our main gate and I ran towards it wondering what

could have happened. There was a large crowd gathered outside our house, but I paid no attention to it and went in by a side entrance. There was not a soul inside. I rushed from room to room and it looked as if burglars had visited the place. The wardrobes were open and everything was in heaps on the floor. Then I crossed into the inner compound, and saw Sardar Kartar Singh's body lying in a pool of blood. Terror-stricken I ran outside and saw our next door neighbour, Maulvi Muhammad Ahmad Khan, talking agitatedly. I stood at the gate trembling with fear. By this time, the army truck had gone and the crowd was dispersing. Maulvi Sahib caught hold of me and shouted at the top of his voice: "Where have you been? We were all worried about you." Then he took me by the arm, led me into his own house and put me in the care of his wife.

His house looked like a refugee camp. Uncles, aunts, cousins had all come to him from their villages in East Punjab. Besides, members of Aziz Bakhsh's family had also crowded into the compound. Our cook was there too. There was no need to ask any questions. He came out with the story the moment I stepped in. "Babuji", he said with some relief in his voice, "you were fortunate to escape those cruel Pathans. Another ten minutes, and it would have been much worse. I would have been finished too but Maulvi Sahib's arrival created such confusion that I got the chance to run by the back door." This blood-chilling tale gave me the shivers. There was no doubt that father and I had a narrow escape on that fateful day. I was told the story piecemeal because all who had been in the house that afternoon, had yet to recover from that traumatic shock.

Piecing things together, I learnt that the Pathans came to our house shortly after Pran and I had left for Atta Muhammad's house. They came in tongas and were armed. There were a lot of Pathans in Lahore in those days; they had probably come to get

their share of the loot which was going on in the city. This particular group had established its headquarters in a refugee camp not very far from Model Town. (The refugee camp was meant for those Muslims who were coming in from East Punjab.) They had their intelligence to tell them about non-Muslims still remaining in nearby areas. Our cook told me that after entering the house, one of them brought out a piece of paper from his pocket and shouted father's name, then mine and then asked about the car. They said they were police officers but the poor cook had never seen such policemen in his life. Not having the courage to put any questions to them, he asked them to wait for father in the verandah. But they had come to look and kill and did not have the patience to wait long.

After about ten minutes, one of them said in an imperious tone: "Where is Lala's wife?" (Fortunately mother was with my brother in Delhi those days.) The servant took them into the inner compound and to get himself out of the difficult situation, pointed to the ladies of Aziz Bakhsh's family. They told the women to remove their jewellery and seized everything of value that they could see there. The ladies cried, shouted and swore that they were Muslims, but the Pathans would not believe that a Muslim family was living in a Hindu's house. When they had finished, their leader said: "Show us where Lala sleeps." They were led to father's bedroom. They broke the locks and brought out every single piece of clothing from the wardrobe. Interestingly enough, they took only the coats; trousers did not interest them. But there was not much in our rooms that they wanted, for heavy furniture was of no use to them. Even the radio set was left behind. They were tribesmen, and did not know the purpose of the strange contraption.

While they were busy tying up their loot in bundles, our next door neighbour, Maulvi Muhammad Ahmad, arrived in his car from the city. Hearing the noise of his engine they rushed



out thinking it was father's car. Maulvi Sahib shouted at them; by that time the ladies of his house had also gathered on their roof to call the people in the neighbourhood for help. The Pathans pointed their guns towards them with the threat: "We will shoot you if you help kafirs". The threat was effective, and they fell silent. As ill luck would have it, the only person in the neighbourhood to hear the shouts was Sardar Kartar Singh, who lived just opposite our house. He came out to see what was wrong. As he came forward, Maulvi Sahib and others made signs for him to go back. But the old man was short-sighted, and in any case it was too late. The blood-thirsty Pathan marauders had seen a Sikh and they immediately caught hold of him. Without delay he was taken to our compound and bound hand and foot with a rope. Leaving the poor old man in that state, they went into father's bedroom to tie up their bundles. When they had done this, one of the Pathans shot him dead and then said, "We have wasted a bullet on this old kafir; he should have been killed with a knife." With this parting message, they left with the booty.

We spent that night at Hafeez Jallundhari's house. Father returned in the evening and when he was told of the raid, he sent a message to Hafeez Sahib. He came with Mr. Bedi and after hearing what had happened, they both advised us not to stay there as they felt that the house could be raided again during the night. I was told to pack some clothes but in the confusion and panic I could only find a couple of my shirts and trousers. It was a terrible night for me. Hafeez Sahib and his family tried their best to make us feel at home, but the day's happening had shattered our peace of mind. Lying there in unfamiliar surroundings, I wondered all night what the future had in store for us and whether it would be possible for me to go back to our house again. All these months I had been hoping that we would move to Delhi for some time. And now when



circumstances had forced us to leave our house, I felt sad and dejected.

The next morning was taken up in consultations between father and Hafeez Sahib. I was forbidden to go out for fear of the Pathans. In those days, my kurta-pyjama would easily betray my identity as a Hindu and after what had happened no one wanted to take any risks. Confined to a room, I waited sullenly to see what would be our course of action. Hafeez Sahib made a hurried trip to our house to see the situation. He came back with the news that it was still dangerous for us to go back. Someone in the neighbourhood had told him that the Pathans were still keeping a watch on the area. What then was to be done? Mr. Bedi suggested that we should go to Delhi by air, leaving everything in Hafeez Sahib's charge. There seemed to be no other way, and father agreed to it. By the afternoon of that day, we were in Delhi telling my brother the story of our narrow escape.

Thus Delhi became my home, but even after more than four decades, I have not reconciled myself to the situation. Emotionally drawn to Lahore, I have always returned to see my old haunts whenever an opportunity has arisen. I am not alone in this craving. Lahore's name has been etched in the memory of all those Punjabis who have ever been a part of the pulsating life of that many-splendoured city.

### **Maulvi Sahib and His Begum**

A few months after our coming to Delhi, father again returned to Lahore. The affairs of the bank could not be settled without his presence there and Hafeez Sahib had a tough time with the depositors. In the early post-partition years, the bigger Indian banks had retained a skeleton non-Muslim staff in Lahore,

but the National City Bank was a small institution and its problems could not be solved without the Managing Director's presence. It was fortunate that Aziz Bakhsh's family was still living in our house; otherwise it would have been occupied by some other evacuee. Once the riots ended father's work took him frequently to Lahore, and not surprisingly, he felt quite at home in Model Town. Within a year he decided to end this shuttling between Lahore and Delhi and stay in Lahore until his job was completed. I had to remain in Delhi to continue my studies. This arrangement worked so well that he never came to India to settle down, and Lahore thus remained my "home town" as long as he lived, and every year I visited it during my vacations.

Model Town was not the same after partition. There were so many new faces in our neighbourhood that sometimes I felt as if it was a new place. This reminds me again of Maulvi Muhammad Ahmad, our next door neighbour. I have already mentioned him and I must now say something more about him. He and his wife provided such a contrast in human behaviour that looking back, I wonder that appearances can be so deceptive.

We all called him 'Maulvi Sahib'. The epithet 'Maulvi' was due less to family connections (his uncle was a professional Imam of their village Mosque near Amritsar), than to the beard he sported. It was a well-cut beard and gave a distinguished look to his tall and hefty figure. Maulvi Sahib was a 'pucca' Congressman. His Gandhi cap and immaculately white khadi clothes proclaimed his political affiliations. This made him popular with his Hindu and Sikh neighbours. A nationalist Muslim was a rare species those days. We did not know what position he held in the party organisation but it was known that he had close contacts with Dr. Khan Sahib, then Prime Minister of the North-West Frontier Province, and with Maulana Abul Kalam

Azad. Probably this was how he got into the business of publishing textbooks for schools in the NWFP.

For me his 'begum' was a more interesting woman. She was a 'purdah' lady and in Maulvi Sahib's house, visitors were generally not admitted beyond the verandah. Therefore, I had no opportunity even to peep inside. The couple were childless and we would see only a black 'burqa' coming in or out of our neighbour's main gate. (And the 'burqa' was of very ample proportions.) For a year or so this was the only contact I had with Maulvi Sahib's begum. Then, as he became more friendly with father, one day I requested him to help me occasionally with my Persian lessons. But he was a busy man and I a mere schoolboy, so he told me to see his wife about it. (Later on I learnt that his knowledge of Persian was rather scanty.)

For me the problem was how to approach the begum sahib. I had never gone inside the house and naturally felt shy about making friends with an elderly lady. Then one day I plucked up courage and entered their main gate which had so far been a prohibited place for me. Seeing me coming in, their servant, Majah, grinned in his characteristic style. I felt as if someone had caught me stealing and slowed my pace, but the next moment I heard him saying loudly, "Come in babuji, come in." Those words gave me courage. Then I heard another voice from inside the house: "Majah, who is it?" And as if to announce my arrival he shouted back: "Som Babu has come."

A few moments later, I was in the courtyard. A very fat lady was sitting on a bare string-cot with a tray full of vegetables in front of her. She was in the process of peeling potatoes. I could not decide whether to greet her in the Hindu or Muslim way. But her "Come in, come in" ended my dilemma and I sat down on the cot without saying either "aslaam-o-alaikum" or

"namaste". She was an engaging conversationalist and in no time at all I forgot that we were almost strangers to each other. As our familiarity increased, I faced the problem of how I should address her. To Majha and other servants, she was 'bibiji', to Maulvi Sahib she was 'Azra' and to her younger sister-in-law she was 'Aapa'. I decided to call her Aapa too and after a little while she became 'Azra Aapa'.

Azra Aapa had no formal education. In her family girls were simply not sent to school. Despite this handicap, she had a fairly good understanding of Urdu and Persian literature, with a smattering of English as well. I was surprised to hear her discussing Marx and Freud. But she had read about these Western authors in Urdu and made no pretensions to scholarship. What I wondered most was how a person who had never gone to any educational institution could gather so much knowledge. Later on when I came to know more of her background, I understood. She had come from a family of poets, writers and journalists; Her eldest maternal uncle, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, was the father of Urdu journalism. He had become a legend in his lifetime, and the daily *Zamindar*, which he had founded and edited for many decades, brought Urdu journalism onto a modern footing. Another uncle, Hamid Ali, was also a litterateur of distinction and editor of several literary magazines. Her young brother, Raja Mehdi Ali, is still remembered in India. The songs he wrote for the Indian films (he remained in Bombay after partition), made him one of the leading song-writers in the industry. Literature was, therefore, the staple diet of the whole family. They breathed it, talked of it and worked for it. Despite a lack of formal education, the ladies were not impervious to this atmosphere. I had the opportunity of meeting Azra Aapa's mother. The old lady spoke in a typical rural Punjabi accent but she was not lacking in grace or sophistication. One-time editor of a woman's journal,



she too had made her mark in the field. The daughter had, no doubt, inherited much from her.

As my visits to Maulvi Sahib's house increased in frequency, the Persian lessons were reduced to secondary importance. I went there more for chit-chat than for anything else. The lady had a busy schedule but she also had the remarkable capacity of being able to do many things at the same time. Every day one of her main tasks was to keep Maulvi Sahib's temper in control and quite often she failed in this. When he got angry, he would shout at her, break the crockery, and abuse the servants in the choicest Punjabi epithets. Such noisy quarrels could not possibly be kept a secret and were naturally a spicy subject of gossip in the neighbourhood.

I never understood why Maulvi Sahib lost his temper so often. Probably he found something lacking in the house which made him dissatisfied all the time. This much was certain that husband and wife were poles apart in taste and temperament; he was a businessman and politician, she a lover of poetry and the finer things of life. As an orthodox Muslim, he wanted to keep his wife in 'purdah', but the 'begum' hated to be confined within the four walls of an empty, childless house. She wanted to move amongst men and talk to them as an equal. This was against family traditions and the tenets of Islam, and Maulvi Sahib could not tolerate such license in women.

Besides such differences, their political opinions also kept them apart. As I have said earlier, our neighbour was a 'pucca' Congressman and a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. (For him crockery-breaking in the course of a quarrel or an occasional wife-beating did not violate the principles of non-violence.) His 'begum', on the other hand was a great admirer of Mr. Jinnah, the Quaid-e-Azam. She believed that the Muslim League was



the only party for their community and those Muslims who opposed the creation of Pakistan were no less than traitors.

This clash of two faiths in the same house sometimes resulted in amusing situations for the neighbours. I vividly remember one such occasion when the Interim Government was formed in 1946. It was the first Government at the Centre with an Indian at its head. The Congress High Command had, therefore, called upon people to celebrate by hoisting the party flag. Mr. Jinnah, on the other hand, boycotted it, and Muslim Leaguers all over India were asked to demonstrate their anger with black flags.

Our Maulvi Sahib hoisted the tricolour with great enthusiasm early on the morning of that day. But a few hours later we were surprised (and amused) to see a black flag flying beside it. It was great fun for the neighbours, but for Maulvi Sahib, it was a matter of shame and disgrace. What infuriated him more was the fact that his sisters-in-law, who had assembled in strength in his house on the occasion, sang a song in praise of Mr. Jinnah. Undoubtedly the mischief was the doing of those naughty girls, but he suspected that his 'begum' was also a party to the conspiracy. As a result, there was a great row and no one had food that day. "Why make such a fuss?", I asked Azra Aapa the next morning. "The man has no sense of humour," she replied calmly.

Such quarrels continued until India was partitioned in 1947. There may have been a more deep-rooted cause to this unhappy situation than mere political differences. I could see that husband and wife had little common ground. They were cast in such different moulds that each became a misfit in the other's company. The contrast became more glaring when the riots occurred. As a friend of the non-Muslims, Maulvi Sahib had

every sympathy for those who were forced to leave their home. The 'begum', on the other hand, thought the transfer of population would prove good for Pakistan. But during the anarchy which followed the great exodus, Maulvi Sahib grabbed everything that had been left in his custody. His wife, who was considered no friend of the Hindus, was always anxious not to keep anything which belonged to others. This contrast in behaviour proved to us that political and religious convictions do not determine a person's norms of morality.

Looking back on those years, I ask myself why an educated and enlightened lady like Azra Aapa believed in the philosophy of communal hatred. She was not a religious woman; she never said her prayers and sometimes even questioned the belief that the Quran was the word of Allah. Then why this faith in the two-nation theory? One can say that there was nothing puzzling about it. There were hundreds and thousands like her who were not religious but who passionately believed in what Mr. Jinnah was advocating. And she belonged to a family where almost all the elders had implicit faith in him. Going a little deeper into the causes, I find that education had made the Muslims communal in outlook. This may seem strange, for education is supposed to widen mental horizons. But in the case of Indian Muslims, education made them aware of the Hindus' nauseating prejudices. And along with this they also began questioning economic disparities between the two communities. For centuries, the rich Hindu had equated his Muslim neighbours with the untouchables, and this could no longer be tolerated by the new crop of educated Muslims.

These factors must have operated for decades and, as I saw during my school days, the Urdu press had now become a powerful instrument for fanning the fire of communal hatred.

Maulvi Sahib's 'begum' picked up her arguments for the editorials of *Nawa-i-Waqt* or *Zamindar* and brought them out in discussions with her nationalist husband. Interestingly, she had great respect for Gandhi and Nehru but not for Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who was a traitor in her eyes. On the other hand, our milkman, Imam din, who never read newspapers, was blissfully ignorant of the two-nation theory.

## Jewels and Cucumbers

It was all excitement as I walked down Anarkali; it was my first visit to Lahore after partition. In those early post-partition days, the atmosphere was still charged with hatred for the non-Muslims who had left the troubled city. For me, setting foot on that soil again was an experience I had never known before. In fact 'excitement' is not the right word for that vortex of emotions. When I left our home after that horror-filled experience of the Pathan's raid, I had not expected to set my eyes on these places again. Now as I looked at the familiar sights, I felt as if I was looking at a place associated with some previous life.

Lahore was in a sullen mood those days. The influx of refugees from India and the mass exodus of those who had lived there for centuries had rent the whole fabric of life. Despite the bitterness which the riots had produced, the older residents felt the void created by the departure of the non-Muslims. For me, the crowning irony of this love-hate relationship was the reaction of our Maulvi Sahib's 'begum'. The unsettled conditions of life had brought swarms of newcomers to Model Town who were, strictly speaking, not white-collar people. Despite her enthusiasm for Pakistan, our neighbour was somewhat irritated to see all those uncouth people, speaking in unfamiliar accents around her. She particularly missed those Hindu gentlemen who would

give up their seat to her in a crowded bus. She was class conscious, and Pakistan or no Pakistan, her middle class culture was not to be discarded.

The refugees were even more unhappy in their new situation. They were dismayed to find themselves in an inhospitable land. Everything was foreign and unfamiliar to them. Their feelings of having been forced to come to an alien land was heightened by their economic plight. To complete the irony, many of them spoke with a touch of nostalgia of their non-Muslim neighbours and friends whom they had left behind. Talking of those early post-partition days, I cannot fail to mention our vegetable-seller. He had been coming to Model Town since my childhood; every morning his resounding voice filled the air, telling us the price of potatoes, onions, brinjals, mangoes and all the things he had brought from the market. I heard him again on my first visit to Lahore after partition. I recognised his voice but he was shouting something else besides the price of his vegetables. Previously I had never taken any notice of his announcements, but this time curiosity prompted me to ask our cook what the old '*sabziwala*' was shouting. "Babuji", he replied, smiling as he said, "the bastard is shouting 'The jewels have gone, and the cucumbers have come.'" (*Chalay gaey heeray, aa gaey kheeray*). All this was, of course, said in a humorous vein but behind it lay the vegetable seller's bitterness at having lost his affluent customers. In those days, when Model Town swarmed with uprooted people, there were very few left who had enough money to buy fruit and vegetables. (Even otherwise, Hindus and Sikhs use vegetables in their daily food more than the Muslims do.).

As a matter of fact, the dawn of freedom had seen a new Lahore which was quite different from the old one. And the pangs of transition were felt by all classes. The city's clubs,



where the elite had assembled every evening, presented a deserted look. Despite the bitterness of partition, there were many who mourned the absence of their non-Muslim friends. In those days one of our neighbours, Raja Farooq Ali Khan, complained that Lahore looked monotonous now. "There are no Sikhs", he said, "with their beards and turbans. Saris also seem to have gone out of fashion. Instead, we see only burqas and Jinnah caps." Lahore, it must be said, had always had the atmosphere of a cosmopolitan city. The Punjabis with their zest for all the good things of life had made it a glamorous place. Lahore had been the place where one came to see the latest fashions. After partition that glamour and colour disappeared and the change came about so quickly that Lahorites who had lived the old life could find no words to express their sorrow. Of course, patriotism demanded that they welcome the transformation through which the city was passing and there was much fervour for the new-born Pakistan. But accompanying this enthusiasm was the misery of the refugees. And Lahore's residents, who were used to the presence of their non-Muslim neighbours, felt that the affluent "kafirs" had not been such bad people after all. A few brave souls mourned their loss loudly and openly. One of them was Abdullah Malik, a writer and journalist who was on the staff of the daily *Imroze*, Lahore's leading Urdu paper. He wrote an article in his paper which was an elegy for the old Lahore. The authorities reprimanded the paper and gave a warning that if such things appeared in the future, strong action would be taken against them.

In the post-partition days there was nothing more offensive to the Pakistani establishment than to say that Lahore had lost something valuable with the departure of the non-Muslims. Despite these constraints, there were many people in the city who felt that something was lacking in their lives. Father had several stories to tell of how people reacted to a Hindu presence



in their midst. Once the owner of our locality's ration-shop refused to supply the provisions due to us on our ration card. The servant who had gone there thrice to get the monthly ration was sent back with some excuse. Ultimately, the shopkeeper told him bluntly not to come to him for a kafir's rations. Father did not know what to do. In those days the atmosphere was still clouded with the hatred engendered at partition; the wounds inflicted by the riots were still fresh and life in the city had not settled back into its normal routine. In view of the general mood of the people, what the shopkeeper told our servant was not at all surprising. After giving some thought to the matter, father went to the rationing officer of the area. He presented his ration-card and told him straight away that because he was a non-Muslim, he could not get his provisions. "You are a Hindu, Sir?", the rationing officer said; and he almost jumped out of his seat in surprise. He found it incredible that a Hindu was still living there and was courageous enough to come to his office with a complaint.

After his initial surprise, he gave quite a speech to the effect that his Hindu and Sikh neighbours had gone and lamented that he could not see them any longer. Father was not prepared for such a reaction and he wondered how unexpectedly some people had reacted to the mass migration of non-Muslims from Pakistan. The drama ended that same morning with a reproof from the rationing officer to the shopkeeper. Needless to say, after this incident we had no difficulty in getting provisions from his shop.

In those days while I walked the streets of Lahore, I too met acquaintances and friends who showed great surprise at my being there at such a time. "What are you doing here?", was a sentence that I heard several times a day. It amused me how all those whom I had known in the past reacted to my presence

in their midst. Their reactions, as a matter of fact, became a study in human psychology for me. Some friends whom I had thought were close to me, did not seem to be at all happy to see me again. All the old friendly warmth had gone. I was somewhat bewildered by their cold cordiality. As far as I could remember, they had never been communally prejudiced and I could not understand the change that had come about them. Had they been swept off their feet by the "Hate the Hindu" wind which had been blowing in the days of partition? This question puzzled me every time I met them in the post-'47 period.

Equally puzzling was the reaction of some people who had not been close to me. One of them was Habib, who had been in my class at the high school. We were poles apart in taste, temperament and political views. Habib was an ardent supporter of Jinnah and the Muslim League and our heated discussions in school had not left a particularly pleasant memory. In my view, he was a narrow-minded communalist. Therefore, I had little desire to meet him again. But after partition, I was cycling in Model Town one day when he saw me. He raised his hand to stop me. Later as we talked, I could sense a change in him. He seemed very friendly and all his gestures indicated the joy he felt at seeing me again. This was very surprising for me. Afterwards we had other occasions to meet and these meetings developed into a friendship.

As I discarded some of the prejudices of my adolescent years, it became a pleasure to hear Habib talking. He was a simple-hearted person who did not mince words while expressing his opinions. He would, for example, remark while passing through a bazaar: "See all these shopkeepers are Muslims. Before partition there were hardly one or two Muslims who owned shops here. This is the advantage of having a separate homeland." Habib's attitude was strikingly different from that of other old

friends in Lahore who never liked to discuss politics with me. But I did not take his views very seriously. We knew that it was not possible for us to convince each other and, therefore, we never took the discussion too far.

Unlike Habib, Abdul Rauf had held almost the same views as I had on India's communal problem. I need not say that he was a Communist. He was senior to me and at student gatherings we had never gone beyond greeting each other during my wanderings in Lahore in post-partition days. I wondered if the Muslim Communists had all gone over to India along with their Hindu and Sikh comrades. None of them was to be seen in the coffee house or in their usual haunts. One day as I was walking along the Mall, I noticed that the bookshop run by the People's Publishing House was still there in the YMCA building. Their signboard indicated that the Communist Party's establishment had not completely closed down. I went in expecting to see some old acquaintances there. Abdul Rauf was sitting in the manager's seat. He looked at me and his face became a big question mark. "What are you doing here?", he said in a voice which was hardly audible. Then getting up from his seat, he came forward and embraced me in the true Indian fashion as if we had been old friends. I had to tell him briefly how it was that I was back in Lahore. Abdul Rauf thought it strange that a Hindu should choose to return to Lahore after the nightmare and turmoil of 1947. But I could understand his joy at seeing me again. Anyone in Pakistan who had had a large circle of non-Muslim friends before partition could not help feeling somewhat emotional at meeting a Hindu acquaintance from old times.

# **I Still Remember Lahore Burning**

**Pran Neville**

*A former diplomat recalls the events that erupted in the historical city of Lahore and calls for greater movement of people across the border between Pakistan and India today.*

I have vivid memories of those terrible days when Lahore, the city of my birth and upbringing, was burning and dying, while the British were engaged in the momentous task of the partition of the subcontinent and transfer of power to Indians. To Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, independence meant to use his memorable phrase, 'a tryst with destiny'. To Jinnah, it was the fulfilment of his dream of a separate homeland for the Muslims, Pakistan.

Lahore has a long and ancient past. No other city in the subcontinent can perhaps be said to have a more chequered history than Lahore, a city ruled by Hindu kings, Mughal emperors, Sikh monarchs and British sovereigns. As the capital of British provinces and centre of a modern system of administration, Lahore emerged as the fortress of the Indian empire that watched over the troublesome Afghans and the Russian borders. With its chain of colleges and professional institutions, Lahore was the leading centre of education in North India. So much so that students from Delhi came to Lahore for higher education. The city had acquired the reputation of being the Paris of the East. Fashion ruled the life of its people whose lifestyles, habits, and customs were considered to be most admirable. It had also become the nucleus of commerce and politics.

The interplay of historical forces had made the Muslims of the Punjab less fanatic and the Hindus and Sikhs less orthodox



and ritual-conscious than elsewhere in the country. The three communities mixed freely and had cordial and friendly relations, subscribing as they did to a composite Punjabi culture which blossomed from the early decade of the century. Muslim influence of nearly a thousand years had left its impact on the citizens' dress, customs and manners, food and language, and even their names.

The British announcement of the decision to quit India by June 1948 had a disastrous effect on the situation in Punjab. The Muslim League launched a campaign of direct action against Unionist Party leader, Khizr, for banning the paramilitary Muslim League National Guards Organisation along with the Hindu RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh). Muslim League leaders defied government orders and courted arrests and there were strikes in Lahore. Khizr was forced to come to terms with the League by lifting his ban but in his exasperation, he gave his resignation on March 3, 1947. The Punjab Governor, Evan Jenkins, explored the formation of the Muslim League Ministry and while he was holding a meeting with the Nawab of Mamdot, the Akali leader Master Tara Singh appeared outside the Legislative Assembly brandishing a sword and shouting Pakistan Murdabad (Death to Pakistan). This led to anti-Pakistan demonstrations by Hindus and Sikhs which sparked off widespread rioting that spread from Lahore and other towns and also the rural areas. The riots left a legacy of hatred and mistrust and even the police force was communalised. Whole villages were put to the sword which was followed by revenge and retaliatory massacres by the other community.

According to the British Plan of June 3, 1947, it was decided to partition both Bengal and the Punjab and the date of transfer of power was brought forward to August 15, 1947. The advancing of the date was an ill-judged decision which

contributed considerably to the communal massacres which accompanied partition. There was active growth of paramilitary organisations and by June 1947, the Muslim League National Guards were reported to have 39,000 members, the RSS over 58,000 and the Sikh Akali Fauj 8,000. By mid-July, hundreds of non-Muslim houses had been burnt down. The Hindus and Sikhs retaliated by throwing bombs into the crowded Muslim localities. The exodus of Hindus and Sikhs, which had begun from April, was now in full swing. They locked-up their properties and believed that they would return when things settled down with the restoration of peace and goodwill. That was not to be. The British divided and quit India on August 15, 1947. The Boundary Commission, under the chairmanship of Sir Cyril Radcliffe entrusted with the task of demarcating the boundary lines, submitted its award to the Viceroy on August 12 and it was made public only on August 16 so as not to disturb the Independence Day celebrations in the two dominions of India and Pakistan.

I was a witness to the chain of events. The spectre of partition was there but we did not think of leaving Lahore even if it became part of Pakistan. Hindus were hoping that Lahore might be included in India. I left Lahore in the first week of March when rioting broke out in some parts of the city. I vividly recall how the train to Delhi was overcrowded though there was no incident. I could never imagine that this would be my last visit to Lahore. As the situation worsened in April and May 1947, and educational institutions closed down for the summer vacations my brothers and sisters joined me in Delhi in my one room studio. My father in government service had opted for Pakistan since he had no intention of leaving Lahore. He had a narrow escape once while returning in a tonga from his office when a mob attacked him. Fortunately someone in the crowd recognised him and escorted him back home. He remained with

my mother in Lahore till the middle of August but on the 14<sup>th</sup>, some Muslim friends came to warn my father and strongly advised him to leave Lahore for a few days and return when the situation improved. They escorted my parents to the railway station and somehow managed to put them in a rail compartment occupied by some English army officers who provided them with a hiding place under their seats. This was the last train to steam out of Lahore station as the train-services were suspended thereafter.

So many years have elapsed but the memories are still fresh in our minds and most of us consider ourselves rootless. We are still groping for an identity. We had to make linguistic and social adjustments. We cannot help expressing our disgust with the political leaders of the time and their responsibilities for the sufferings. It is ironical to recall that Mahatma Gandhi advised non-Muslims in Lahore in the first week of August 1947 to remain when more than half of the non-Muslim population had already left the city. The massive destruction of life and property that accompanied partition and the subsequent fifty years of Cold War in the subcontinent were not anticipated by the political leaders.

Unfortunately, India and Pakistan, with an age-old common heritage, and social and cultural traditions, are still distant neighbours. I recall the enthusiasm with which we welcomed the participants from Pakistan at the annual Indo-Pakistan Mushairas held in Delhi. I remember how once the celebrated poet of Pakistan, Hafiz Jullundhari, dubbed the politicians of the two countries as quail fighters and exhorted the poets and writers to ignore them and recreate bonds of friendship between the common people.

It is important to give due recognition to the ethnic ties and common cultural heritage of the Punjabis across the borders. Though there are practically no divided families in the two

Punjab, yet there is a burning desire among the aging and fading generations of both Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims of the Punjab to visit the places of their birth and upbringing.

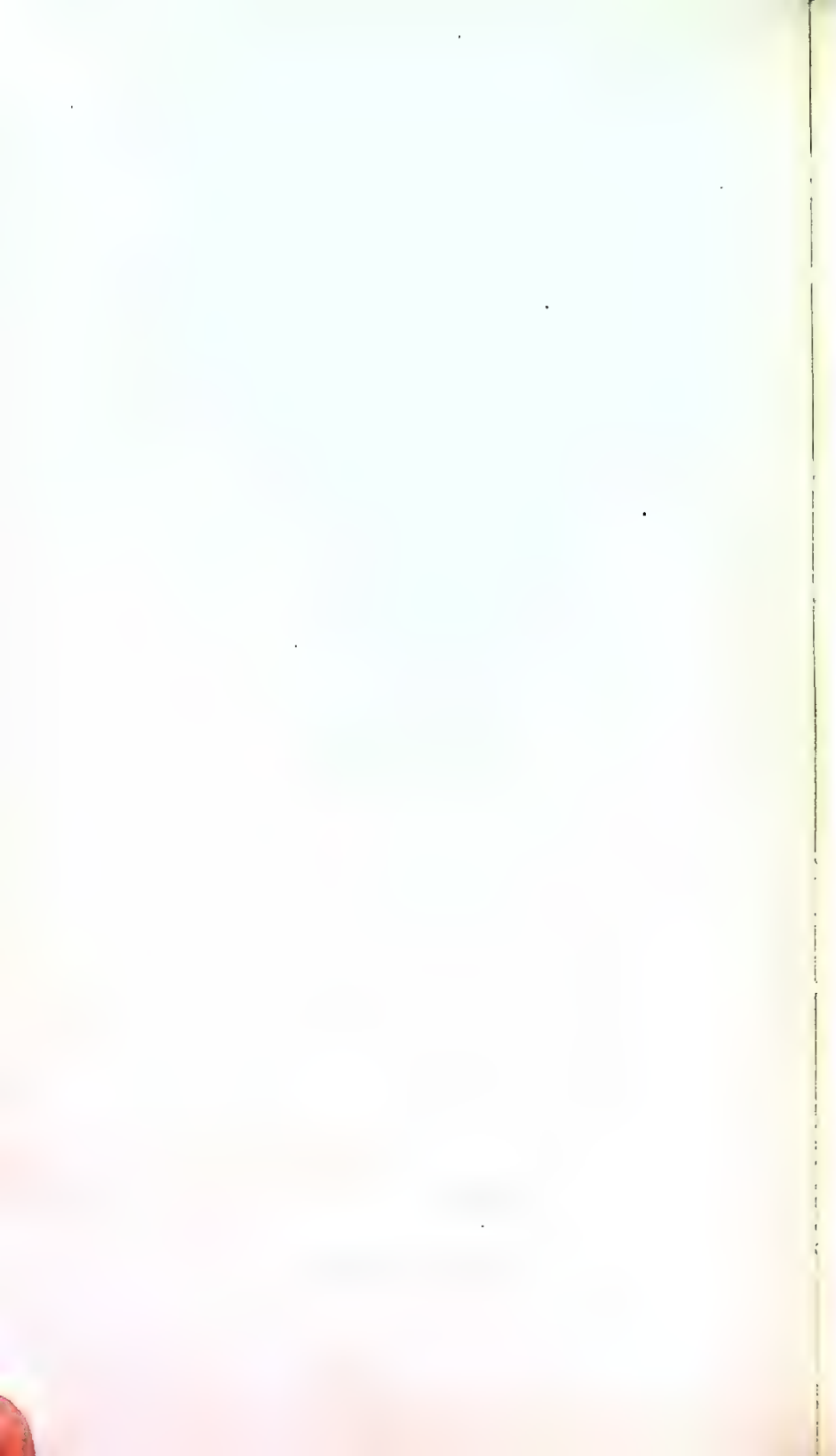
For decades, the post-partition generations have been fed on tales and anecdotes by their elders about the towns and villages across the borders from where they were forced to flee for no fault of theirs. So even the young Punjabis are keen to visit these places not only to satisfy their curiosity but also interact with their ethnic counterparts on the other side. I wish both the Governments of India and Pakistan would pay heed to this aspect and take suitable steps to facilitate such visits on either side. We, in this regard, have the example of France and Germany which created more destruction through wars in Europe than any other countries in the world, and yet today, they are part of the European Community with free movement of people and no custom barriers.

Let us wish and hope that one day, in the not too distant future, India and Pakistan will likewise come together not politically in the old conventional sense but economically, socially and culturally with free movement of people and goods through agreements and understanding.





***Four***



## Oranges and Apples

### Kamlabehn Patel

This is adapted from an interview of Kamlabehn Patel by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin.

The loss of lives and property, and the widespread violence that accompanied partition have been well-documented by historians and scholars of Independence. Less well-known is the incidence of the large-scale abduction of women of all three communities, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh, during that period. No official estimates exist of the exact number of such abductions, but it is safe to assume that there would have been well over 10,00,000 or more. In the aftermath of partition, the governments of India and Pakistan were swamped with complaints by the relatives of 'missing' women, seeking to recover them either through government, military or voluntary efforts. Recognising the enormity of the problem, the two governments entered into an Inter-Dominion Agreement in November 1947, to recover as many women as possible, as speedily as possible, from each country and restore them to their families.

In all, approximately 30,000 women—12,000 Muslim and 18,000 non-Muslim—were recovered by the police and social workers of both countries, primarily between 1947 and 1952. Kamlabehn Patel, an Indian social worker, was stationed in Lahore for a few years and was actively involved in recovering Hindu and Sikh women from Pakistan. Recovery work had been entrusted to the Women's Section, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, under the direction of two principal honorary advisers, Rameshwan Nehru and Mridula Sarabhai. Kamlabehn Patel, a Gandhian, was Mridula Sarabhai's right-hand woman in Lahore till 1952, and represented both India and Pakistan on



the Special Tribunals set up by both governments, to resolve disputed cases.

How I got involved in recovery work was by accident. Actually, I was supposed to go and work with Bapu at Sabarmati Ashram but I didn't really want to go there. Mridulabehn came to my rescue. She told Bapu "there are other things she can do as her health is fragile. I will find something else for her." So she asked me to work with her. I said, "but what can I do?" She said, "you be my personal secretary." "But I can't type," I said, "I don't speak English, how can I be your secretary?" She said, "look all these skills can be bought, I don't need those from you—I'll give you a typist, you don't worry about all that. What I want from you is that you should be able to take decisions on important matters if I'm not around, so that I know, Kamla is there, I don't need to worry."

I thought about it for a while and then she said I would go on six months' probation! I first went to Pakistan in November 1947. Mridulabehn sent me a telegram asking me to come to Delhi. When I arrived there, she wasn't around, but I was handed a ticket to go to Lahore. I didn't know why I was being sent there, I was just told, you have to reach there immediately.

Shiv Prakashji, our first High Commissioner, was already there. He was quite adamant that proper arrangements should be made before we went—he thought Bimlabehn was crazy not to have insisted on it. However, we went. We had to establish a camp in Lahore, meet government officials and start a dialogue. We had not attended any conclave regarding this work and so at times were quite at sea about it, and yet went ahead.

Gradually, we learnt how to handle the work and situations as they arose. We made mistakes, small as well as big ones. For

instance, one day a peon came and said to me that Kapur Saheb (an ICS officer) sends his salaams. I did not understand the meaning of this 'salaam', so I said please give him my salaams too! At night, when all gathered, I mentioned this episode to everyone. Then I understood that this was his way of calling for me and that I should have gone to see him. The next day I went to see Kapur Saheb and apologised for not understanding his message!

There were approximately 22,000 women who were in my charge. Thousands of women who came from various districts of Pakistan and so many others from several places in India, had to be rescued. Now when I look back at all that I was able to accomplish, I myself marvel at my own courage and the circumstances that pushed me into this work.

There was an ICS officer, Mr. K. L. Punjabi, who felt that we had not recovered enough women in proportion to the money spent on this work. But I said to him: "When you see a family reunited, you see father meet his daughter and the joy on their faces, you don't remember the lakhs that have been spent. When you see their happiness, you realise it is worth it."

Let me tell you about Sialkot. I went to Sialkot which was a closed district. I had no intention of going there because of the whole Azad Kashmir business. It was an anxious time since there was no agreement on Kashmir. I was instructed to go with the SP wearing a salwar-kameez. No sari, under any circumstances. This SP was a complete rogue. He used to worm out all the information from us by being on his best behaviour. Often I told Mridulabehn that I was afraid of dealing directly with him and because he was waiting to catch me out, I would make a mistake. And my mistake would be India's mistake. She said, "don't worry, only you can do this work, and I'm as capable of making a mistake as you are."

You can imagine how I felt, an Indian woman entering a closed district at that time.... We were fighting about Kashmir.... But they were so excited that an Indian woman was coming! People came to see me, cried while asking about their relatives on this side. They asked about the situation obtaining on the other side. In their anxiety they asked questions which seemed foolish, like: 'My mother's relative went that side, would you know where he went? Did you ever meet him?' They were very hospitable towards me—a woman had come from Hindustan to see them—in spite of the fact that we were within five miles of the fighting.

I was still afraid because I was an Indian. Suppose a crowd had gathered to throw stones, attack? But the opposite happened. On the way nothing happened because the SP was in his uniform, but I was afraid that he himself might start something.

You see, the Hindus never did accept the Muslims because if they had, these things would have been avoided. If they had looked upon them as one does on a younger or older brother, then they would not have developed this complex. Even the common people treated them like untouchables, never let them get close. Look, I am a Gujarati. Among us, there was not much warmth for them. In Gujarat, there were no Muslim zamindars or highly educated people, only farmers or artisans. They could not equal either the money or education of the Muslims of the Punjab or UP. At the time of partition, when I went to Punjab for the first time, I realised that there was a lot of socialising and warmth among the two communities. They used to embrace each other and when they were forced to separate, they longed to see each other again. If they were together alone, they would embrace, but in public they would shout slogans against each other!

When the recovery work started progressing, this antagonism

became much sharper. Of course, it became an issue between two countries then. There was this young Pathan girl—she must have been about 15 or 16, whose family used to go to Kashmir every year for the summer. They were from Rawalpindi. There she used to meet a young boy from Amritsar, a Hindu, whose family also used to go to Srinagar.

When the trouble after partition began, and she saw all the camps being set up around Rawalpindi, she realised something was going on and that she wouldn't be able to meet young Jeetu any more. Her name was Kismet. So what did she do? She ran away to Amritsar. She had no idea where Jeetu's house was, but all she knew was that he lived there. How she got there is a story by itself.

She arrived at the Hindu refugee camp in Rawalpindi—she had taken a few belongings with her in a small bag—went to the camp commander (the Indian Army was in charge of this camp) and said, "I am a Hindu girl separated from my parents—please help me reach India." Because she was so young, he took her himself in his jeep to an Amritsar-bound train and saw her off.

When Kismet got down at Amritsar—she was not at all anxious because she had succeeded in running away—she waited patiently in one corner of the platform. A volunteer saw her—those days Bhimsen Sachar (later Chief Minister of Punjab) sometimes used to be at the station to receive incoming trains. He was there that day, and the volunteer took Kismet to him. She told him her story—that she was from a village in Rawalpindi, had been with her maternal aunt when the riots broke out. After some days, when she finally reached the safety of a camp, she was told that her parents had already left for India. Now she was quite alone. Bhimsen Sachar instructed one of the local



workers to take special care of her and she managed to find Jeetu's parents' address from this worker, in the course of conversation. She then sent him a message to come and fetch her from the camp! No one doubted her story or the fact that she was a Hindu refugee! But because she was a minor she wasn't allowed to leave the camp with Jeetu. Somehow, he and his parents managed to get permission from the deputy commissioner to take her away from the camp, and before anyone knew anything, they had got married in the Golden Temple.

Now this case became a prestige issue between India and Pakistan. Her parents reported her missing, the Pakistan Rehabilitation Minister requested Gopalaswamy Iyengar to look for Kismet and send her back to Rawalpindi. Gopalaswamy Iyengar called Mridulabehn and me and asked us to make a special effort to find her.

Now, Jeetu knew that something was going on. So when I next came to Amritsar from Lahore, he rushed to my office and told me the whole story. It had been discussed in the Search Service Bureau at Amritsar and was registered as a case of abduction, so he knew about it. He pleaded with me, saying it was not an abduction at all, that Kismet had come on her own, that they had been properly married. But by now it was an inter-dominion issue: K. L. Punjabi and another senior officer, Nagpal, and I, discussed the case. I was not at all inclined to hand her back to Pakistan. How could we consider it an abduction when the girl had travelled all the way from Rawalpindi herself, taking such a risk? And how could the Government of India force her to return against her will? But Punjabi did not agree with me. He said, "If we don't honour the agreement, how can we expect Pakistan to enforce it? We have to consider the wider interests of the country."



Well, we managed to persuade Jeetu and Kismet to meet Mridulabehn at Hotel Amritsar—that was where she camped when she came there—but it was a difficult meeting. Mridulabehn offered to accompany Kismet up to Wagah to meet her parents, but she refused. She told me afterwards, "If God himself came with, me, I wouldn't go! My parents will kill me as soon as they see me."

Now, Teetu was very worried because he thought the police might come and take her away forcibly. So both of them fled to Calcutta! Nobody knew where they were, and the Pakistan government was putting great pressure on India to recover her.

It's a long story, but ultimately Jeetu and Kismet returned to Amritsar and a message was sent to Kismet's uncle, in the External Affairs Ministry of Pakistan, to come to Delhi to discuss the case. We arranged for him to meet Kismet, in our presence, and it took almost five days to persuade her to return to Lahore and meet her parents. She was told she would stay with the IG of Police there, Khan Qurban Ali. She needn't go to Rawalpindi, and after a week she should decide what she wanted to do.

Jeetu, Kismet, her uncle and the Pakistan SP Rizvi, arrived in Lahore by plane—Kismet was loaded with gold jewellery. We went to the Secretariat where we were supposed to hand Kismet over to the IG, but she refused to get out of the car without Jeetu. After a lot of arguing finally Jeetu persuaded her to go in, saying he would come and get her in seven days' time.

From Khan Qurban Ali's place her parents took her home—Khan Saheb should not have allowed it, but he did. We were very upset but what could we do? Mridulabehn and I went to her Abba's place where we were made to wait for a long time. Finally Kismet came out from the zenana and we got a real

shock. She was completely transformed. Her walk, her dress, her behaviour—we thought it must be her sister, not her. Then she turned on us and with an accusing finger pointed at Mridulabehn, said: 'There she is! That woman with short hair is the one who prevented me from coming back! I asked her so many times but she wouldn't listen. And let that Jeetu come near me—I'll tear him to bits and feed him to the dogs!'

We couldn't believe our ears. Could this be the same Kismet who had refused to come? But there was no point in staying there any longer, so we left. I was both shocked and dismayed: what would I say to Jeetu? How could I explain this turn of events to him? When he came to see me in Amritsar, he was very angry and very sad, and he said I had betrayed him. "You should have taken me with you," he shouted. "Why didn't you take me? She would never have stayed back if I had been with you." He never recovered from Kismet's action, and tried many times to find her in Lahore. I tried to dissuade him, but he wouldn't listen. He was like a man possessed. He never did find her, of course.

Even today, I tremble a little when I remember this incident. We were absolutely convinced she would come back. Kismet said all those things to rehabilitate herself in her parents' eyes, out of fear, that is why she changed. I met her mother, father and sister—they were so happy that their daughter had come back. Jeetu's family were banias—he was the only son and they were all very happy with Kismet—what was special was that she was a friend's daughter. And Kismet argued with us for almost an hour. Rizvi, her uncle, Jeetu and I were there. She said to me, I will not leave Jeetu behind, I will take him with me. I understand that she was only a 14-year-old girl and that after the thrill of eloping passed, she was afraid that her parents would kill her, would not keep her. She was very young,

if she had been older, it may have been different. Now, Sudarshan was older, about 23 years old, very strong-willed, but she melted when she saw her brother and father crying. So, she went with them, but then she thought it was wrong to do so and she came back.

It was such a difficult time, so many people leaving their homes, so much violence. But I think there were economic reasons, too. The number of Hindus in the Punjab was greater than the number of Muslims in India. Another reason could be that wherever the Hindus went, they exploited the Muslims. There were quite a few bania moneylenders who lent money at such exorbitant rates of interest that they were like bloodsuckers. When an opportunity arose, they took their revenge. So many factors were involved, it was not only one factor that brought about partition. One cannot only blame the Muslims for subjecting Hindu women to violence, the Hindus also did it. In the Golden Temple 200 women were made to dance naked for the whole night.

Yes, in 1947, not in the Durbar Sahib, but in its compound. And so many people enjoyed this unholy show. If I tell this to anyone, they don't like it, but these are facts. I will talk on behalf of women. I was not a politician. If I had been one, I would have said that the Muslims did everything, but we never did anything. But we were no less—how many we kept back, how many women we sold in the same way that baskets of oranges or grapes are sold or gifted. Women were distributed in the same way. You may ask why we uprooted these women again, but in my view, they were never ever secure, had never put down roots.

The Muslim women we recovered in India were mostly sent back; there were approximately 12,000 women. Ours were about

9,000. Most of the Muslim women were recovered from the Punjab, from the villages and towns.

But more from the villages. That is because economic factors played a great part. Those nine or ten thousand women who were brought back from Pakistan were accepted by the Hindus. Why? Because of economic factors. People had come from there as refugees and so they did not have money. They did not have a woman to do the housework—a housewife. But here, there was a woman available. So forgetting everything, they took her. They accepted them out of helplessness, not out of broad-mindedness. It was not so important for the Muslims because they did not think of the women as impure, and they hesitated much less when taking them back. But not the Hindus.

This was my experience. A Hindu woman felt that she had been rendered impure, had become sullied, was no longer pativarta. A Muslim woman did not feel like this. It was not in her blood; it is in ours. We feel we have been polluted, we are no longer worthy of showing our faces in public. How can we face our family when we go back? We reassured the women saying, "See how many times your father has come to fetch you." Even then they would feel ashamed of themselves, because this tradition is so deeply ingrained in us. And Muslims were not stigmatised by society. While Hindus say that since they (the women) have lived for so long with a Muslim.... Their parents would say that they had left their daughters with one or other of their aunts—they could not say openly that their daughters had been abducted.

This is our psychology. In the upper and middle classes this difficulty was there, but not in the lower classes. A middle class woman might commit suicide. There were some cases like this, of course, but not too many. I have written about a case



where the parents thought it was all right to sacrifice the life of a young girl in order to save a whole family. And when we were arguing about her recovery the father said, this is our girl, and the girl denied it because she was terribly hurt by their behaviour. She said, "I don't want to go back. I have married of my own free will. I don't want anything from my parents." When she refused to return, it became very awkward. She was in the home of a police inspector. We felt that if we had found an abducted woman in the house of a police inspector, then how could we expect the police to do any recovering? That is why we had to bring her back. Our social worker went to Multan and met her. She said, "I will not go." Then we requested the Pakistan authorities to leave her in our camp in the Ganga Ram Hospital (Lahore) for a couple of days. Then if she said that she didn't want to return it was fine, but she would have to report at the camp and confirm that she didn't want to. So, she was brought by force. Her husband said, "I will take her back at night." I said, "She will not return at night, she will stay the night with me." He said, "Why should my wife stay with you, what right have you to keep her?" Then I said, "She is after all, our daughter. When a daughter comes to her mother's place, she stays for a few days. She has no parents." That girl kept saying that she didn't want to go to her parents, she wouldn't move an inch. After two or three days, she broke down, she told us that her parents had been told by the police inspector, "If you leave your daughter, gold and land with me, I will escort you all to the cantonment in India." That man was already married and had children. He didn't need to marry her. He told her father, "You give me this girl in exchange for escorting you all to an Indian cantonment." Then her father give him his daughter, 30 tolas of gold and his house. One night I called the girl to my bedside and said, "If you want to go back (to the inspector), then I will send you. If you don't want to go back to your parents, don't go, but please tell me why." Then she became tearful and said, "Behenji,



what can I tell you? I am not happy at this inspector's place. As long as he is in the house, I am all right, but as soon as he leaves on duty, his wife harasses me, calls me the daughter of a kafir and so on. She makes me do all the work as if I were her maid. The man loves me, but he is under pressure from his family. But those parents who sacrificed me—I will never go back to them." I said, "All right, don't go back to them, stay with us." We couldn't let her return to Pakistan. This was a prestige case. If we let it go, we would have to eat humble pie in front of Pakistan. We had to bring her before the Tribunal when it met. Just before that I had thought that I would get her married to a nice boy in India, specially because she was not happy with this man. If she had been happy, I would not have thought this way, but she was unhappy and would have had to spend the rest of her life in this fashion. There was an officer whose private assistant was a very good man. I let the boy and the girl meet once, in secrecy, because it was against our policy. For this Mridulabehn got very angry with me, but I was quite obstinate. I insisted that we had no right to keep a woman in this manner. When everything was settled, I decided that this young woman could now face the Tribunal without flinching. During the cross-examination, the Pakistan SP called for the Inspector (her abductor) as a witness. Imagine that! But we were forced to agree because we were told that as a police inspector he could make trouble for us in our recovery work, later. So he came. Meera (the girl in question) was also called in and asked, "Where do you want to go?" She said that she wanted to go to India. The man glared at her and shouted, "So you want to go to India, eh?" She said, "Yes, I want to go to India." Then he yelled, "What do you think you are saying? I saved your parents, I have spent so much money on you. Even the bangles you are wearing are mine." I intervened and told them (the escorting police) that she should be taken in to change

into her own clothes. Then I gave him back the clothes, gold and other things he had given her, saying she could do without.

She got married later, but not in Pakistan obviously. We had the marriage in Amritsar afterwards, with the proper arrangements. The boy got a posting to Shimla after a transfer from Pakistan. Her parents also came to the wedding. Five or six of us friends, got together and arranged a tea party for her. Now this fact, after being exaggerated, got to Mridulaji's ears and, of course, she put me on the mat because these kinds of cases were outside our jurisdiction and we should not have been involved in them—they were really Mrs. Thapar's responsibility, because they had to do with rehabilitation, not recovery. Mridulabehn said, you were my representative when you did this, you exceeded your brief. I said well, if you like, I will put in my resignation and go back to Bombay. I felt deep inside me that I had carried out my responsibility faithfully. If, because of me, their policy had been harmed, then I would go back. At that she cooled down. Then, after a year when I was in Amritsar, this girl came to see me with her child. She came to see me specially, all the way from Shimla. They were both very happy, she said. But I can't forget her anger at being sacrificed by her parents.

One of the best things about our recovery work was the fact that all parties—Communist, Socialist and Congress, etc.—sank their differences and worked together. Our social workers used to accompany the police party—their women never did, they didn't have the motivation to go with the police. The police used to bring the women and leave them in the camp. We had several members of the Congress, Socialists and even Communists among our social workers. One day, Begum Fatima of Lahore said to us, "I have heard that you have kept a Muslim girl as a prisoner and hidden her in the camp."

"What are you saying Begum Fatima?" I replied, "we have hidden four crore people, if you wish you can take them all." And, in truth.

I had hidden her! She was a disputed case. But one had to do these things because the circumstances demanded it. I said that for one thing, our girls have gone to sleep and for another, you're talking about one girl, when I have four crores here! We were always being accused of keeping Muslim women. I was especially prone to this charge because I had to meet the Collector for sorting out problems relating to the camp—its site, rations and allotment of houses. Urdu newspapers published reports that India had sent out very inexperienced young girls to do recovery work!

# Nineteen Forty-Seven

Amrita Pritam

The most gruesome accounts of marauding invaders in all mythologies and chronicles put together will not, I believe compare with the blood-curdling horrors of this historic year. Tale after tale, each more hair-raising than the last, would take a whole lifetime to retell. Uprooted from Lahore, I had rehabilitated myself at Dehradun for a while, but later went to Delhi for work and a place to live in. On my return journey

I could not get a wink of sleep on the train. The pitch-black darkness of the night was like a sign of the times. So piercing were the sighs the winds carried and echoed, it seemed we were back in mourning over this Watershed of History. The trees loomed larger and larger like sentinels of sorrow. There were patches of stark aridity in between like the mounds of massive graves. The words of Waris Shah, "How'll the dead and departed meet again?" surged back and forth through my mind. I thought, a great poet like him alone could bewail the loss a Heer once had to bear. But who could lament the plight of millions of Heers today? I could think of no one greater than Waris Shah to chant my invocation to. In the moving train, my trembling fingers moved on to describe the pangs I went through :

From the depths of your grave,

Waris Shah,

Add a new page to your saga of love

Once when a daughter of Punjab wept

Your pen unleashed a million cries,

A million daughters weep today, their eyes turned

To you, Waris Shah.

The published poem found its way to Pakistan. Later still, Ahmed Nadeem Kazmi disclosed in his foreword to a book by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, that he had read the poem in jail. On his release, he recounts having seen copies of it with common men who would weep when they read it.

At a BBC interview in London (1972), I was introduced to Sahab Kizilbash, the Pakistani poetess, who exclaimed: "Arre! So this is Amrita...the writer of those lines! I ought to be embracing her. . . !" At Surinder Kochhar's an evening later, Sahab and other Pakistani poets, Saki Farruqui, Famida Riaz, Abdullah Hussain, the famous author of *Udas Naslain*, Nizakat Ali, and Salamat Ali had assembled. The cultural life of London that night was enriched by much reciting of poetry. When it was Nizakat Ali's turn, someone pointed out that he had never recited without some instrumental accompaniment. Yet, for one who had written on Waris Shah, he was chivalrous enough to consent and his superb voice enriched the airs afloat that memorable night.

In 1975, Mashkoor Sabri, a famous poet from Multan came to Delhi for an Urs recital. He told us of the Waris Shah annual celebration at which a folk-art exhibition is held, folk dances are performed, and folk-songs are sung. The climax of this cultural evening is a Poets' Symposium. This multifaceted programme ends with a half-hour recital of Heer Ranjha. The grand stage (100' by 80') on which the Heer Ranjha sets form the darkened background, gradually lights up showing Waris Shah arising from his grave. The sets then continue to change with the shifting light, to synchronies with the lines of the poem. The reverberating sound effects of the finale acclaim a new dawn awakening a new spirit of love.

It was ironically the same poem that a quarter of a century



earlier had evoked so much censure and disapprobation, with the Sikhs holding me guilty of not having addressed my invocation to Guru Nanak, and the communists, to Lenin or Stalin. Many poets conspired to rant against the poem itself....

In the totality of myself as a writer, the woman in me has had only a secondary role to play. So often have I nudged myself into an awareness of the woman in me. The writer's role is obvious. But the existence of that other being have I increasingly discovered through my creative works.

Excerpt from his autobiography *Raseedi Ticket* (The Revenue Stamp)

### Excerpt from an Interview

**Shahira Naim (SN):** Tell me about the Punjab you were born in.

**Amrita Pritam (AP) :** Punjab is the land of the five rivers. To explain the original concept of one of the rivers, I would like to quote one incident. It is written in the Upanishads. When Vashisht rishi mourned the death of his sons he became so depressed and sad that he wanted to commit suicide. He went to the river, tied his hands and feet and jumped into the river. The soul of the river thought: "If this rishi drowns in my water they will be cursed for all times", and so it tried to untie the ropes and wash the rishi ashore so that he could be saved by the sun's rays. That was the incident after which the river was called Vipasha, *pash* means *bandhan* (bondage) and Vipasha means *bandhan-mukt* (free from bondage). From there followed the name Beas. This is the soul of the soil. It is also the land where the first niti shastra was written and also written here. That is why I cannot understand the reason for his quarrel. There is no problem which can not be solved by logic and reason. That is

what I had learnt from my father and he from his. I was a child in undivided Punjab. Then we were slaves and played into the hands of our rulers who succeeded in dividing us - in the name of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, Partition Followed.

**S.N.** How did you experience it at the personal level?

**AP:** I am telling you about the most personal level. Riots were going on between the Muslims and the Hindus-Sikh combine. The Hindus and Sikhs were together.

**S.N.:** What about your home? What kind of family were you brought up in?

**AP.:** My father was a scholar and I was the only child. My mother died when I was hardly eleven. There was no other person in the house. My house was full of books and when my father's friends came they talked of little else. I am talking of my personal life. That is what I observed around me. My father tried to educate me not only through schools, but from what he had inherited. With his friends he ran a monthly Punjabi paper. And our house was full of writers - Hindu, Muslim and Sikh.

**S.N.:** As a child in a Punjabi household did you experience anything which made you question the established norms?

**A.P.:** My maternal grandmother lived at two places - with her grandson and at times with us. Once a Muslim friend of my father came and *lassi* was being served. My grandmother sent him a different glass. It was one of the three which she kept apart from the other utensils. I asked her to send it in the glasses which we normally used. She refused. Later she explained that these glasses were kept separate from the Muslims. I fought

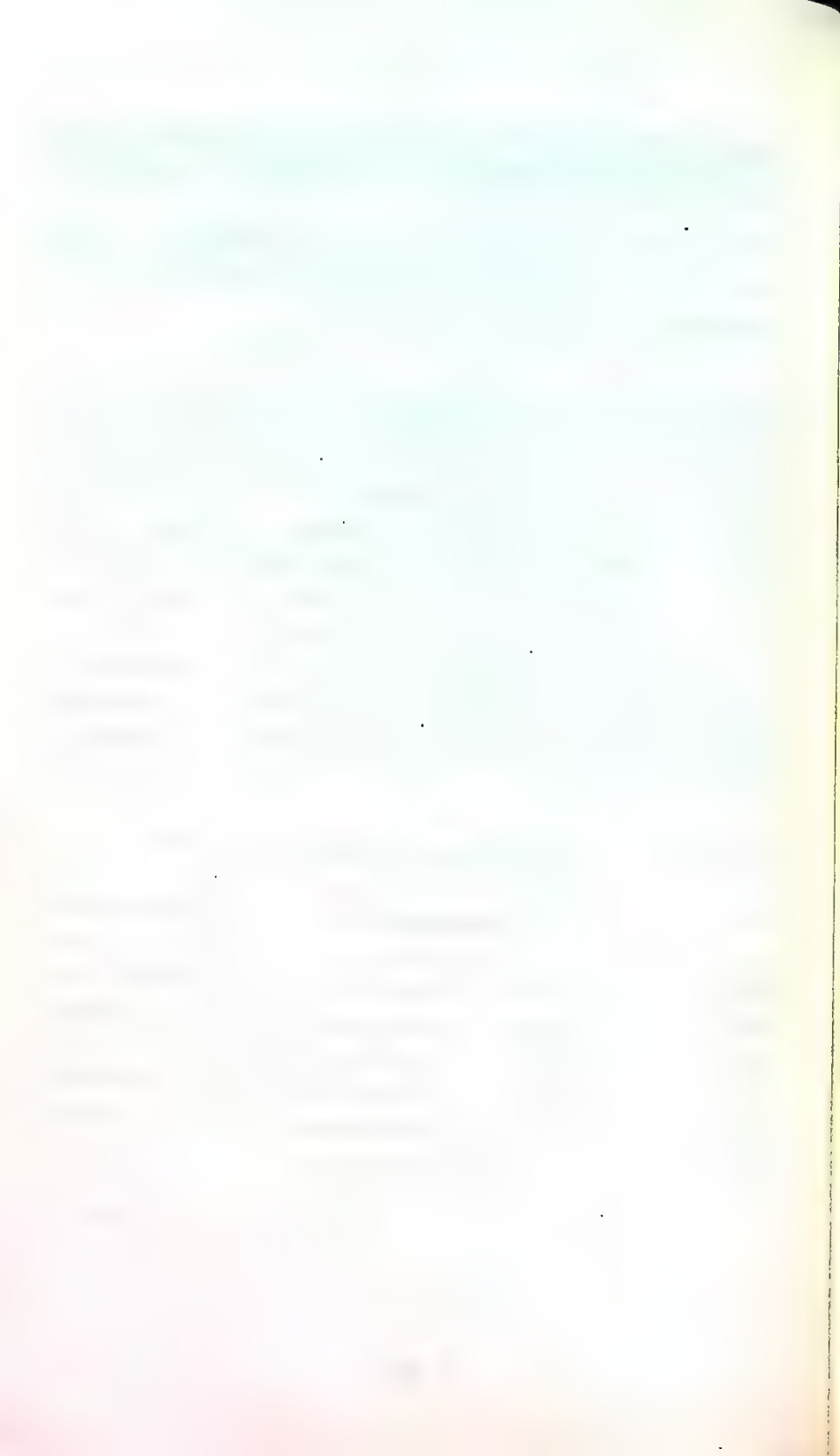
with her and threatened to give up food. The matter reached my father and from then onwards no glass was Hindu or Muslim.

**S.N.:** In those days even outside the so-called intellectual circles there was frequent interaction and the social fabric was not so threadbare even if the glasses were separate.

**A.P.:** But why have separate glasses either? In those days water at the railway platform was hawked as Hindu *pani* (water) and Muslim *pani*. What stupidity! Water is not Hindu or Muslim. The sun's rays make no distinction. We carried on this terrible mistake by even making our universities Hindu and Muslim. What nonsense! We have ourselves created all this. That is what I call 'borrowed foolishness'. These complications were added to the lives of our people so they could play with their minds and rule over them. Common people are ruled by two powers, the political power rules over the body and the other forces - to so-called religious forces...rule over the minds. And this is a conspiracy to enslave the people.

**S.N.:** What is the most distasteful memory you have?

**A.P.:** Before partition there was a part of Lahore where after sunset no Sikh was supposed to go. In an abusive way they were called 'Sikhdas'. On the other side, where Hindus and Sikhs lived they called the Muslims 'Muslahs'. This vulgarity of language, mind and soul, is the reason why we suffered the partition. Now the same game is being played again to break our country. We cannot get away by blaming other forces. Why are we letting the other forces have a field day?



## **Either, Neither or Both**

### **Shehla Shibli**

It was early in 1946 that I decided to get married—to Shibli, a Muslim. By then he had contributed seven succulent *raans* (legs of sacrificial animals) to the household over seven Eid-ul-Azhas and I was impressed. My family, who had partaken of the same *raans* and enjoyed eating them, remained unimpressed to the extent of disapproval. They said the times were also wrong for inter-communal marriages, which could overnight become international and cause problems. Friends, they told me, had been known recently to turn into enemies in some cases.

But since they saw that the taste of the *raans* lingered on my lips, Father declared all our property as refugee property, including our Model Town bungalow which he had originally put in my name. In this he had listened to the advice of his next-door neighbour and friend, Sardar Nihal Singh, who had told him that my life would be made unsafe by Muslim predators, who would think nothing of plunging a knife in my chest to acquire the property. My father shuddered, looked into Shibli's innocent eyes, and wavered. But he was in strong hands, which held bridge cards evening after evening when four friends sat together to dissect the political situation changing around them. He succumbed and soon after left Lahore to join my brother in Delhi, where he had set up his medical practice. He had chosen Delhi because Father had too many friends in Lahore, all entitled to free medicines as well as advice.

Why Father left is another story. With the turn of the tide, all his personal staff of servants, Muslim as well as Hindus, had left. The huge bungalow remained unswept, while garbage piled inside as well as outside on the road. Lawns were littered



with fallen leaves, broken twigs, and the eleven seers of milk which our pedigree cow delivered daily remained curdling in the pots and pans, till we were falling short of utensils to hold them, for our gawala was the only worker who continued his daily visits to milk the cow, to our extreme discomfort. After Pakistan was declared, my husband and I gave the cow to him as a present, because there was no grass left in the fields to feed her. The cow, when he pulled her ropes to draw her away from the house, refused to move. But when at last she felt she had no recourse, kept turning and looking back at us in sorrow, and there were tears in her eyes.

Nor was the accumulating milk the only serious problem Father had to encounter. My infant son's napkins had grown into a menace with his running tummy. There was no way to fight this, as my Ayah had deserted us. Then there was an accumulating number of milk bottles facing Father, a heart patient. When my sister-in-law blamed him for his heartless partiality in choosing me against her and my brother, and remaining in Lahore for my sake, he gave way, and left.

Brought up in the wilds of Kashmir in a progressive family of Hindus, we had remained totally unfamiliar with problems of race, creed, or colour. Our coterie of friends had always included boys and girls of every kind and community. Our servants were selected with the same sentiment. My very first Ayah in Jammu had been Mehro, or Mehr Bibi, and the second in Kashmir was Janan—again a Muslim.

If we found a difference in the mode of living, praying or eating of our friends and staff, neither we nor our parents felt alienated, since the same God, we were told, had created us all. He had delighted in creating a vast variety of people in the Universe and so should we delight in it. We did.

The main divisive difference that made the orthodox hostile was that Muslims were meat-eaters, including the flesh of beef. The orthodox among Hindus were vegetarians, and spurned this practice of killing animals, specially resenting the killing of the cow who yielded milk. This made them exclude Muslims from their kitchens even when they befriended them. We, a family of meat-eaters, had no such problem with our friends, and shared our meals with them happily.

There were other divisive practices which were created by forces alien to our way of thinking. It seemed funny to us that while all Hindu girls in schools were taught Hindi and English, Hindu boys learnt Urdu and English. That may have been one of the reasons for my early rejection of the primitive local school, considering my deep interest in Urdu poetry, and the ghazals we went about singing in the house. The immediate cause, however, was when I saw the Head Mistress undoing the hair of a young lower-middle class girl, and comb it before the whole class into a tight plait. This kind of indignity, even though there was not the remotest chance of it coming my way (my father-being a member of the Board of Trustees, for one thing) could not be tolerated. No amount of persuasion would make me enter the premises of the school again. A bright Kashmiri teacher was engaged to coach me at home. His name was Shri Dhar Joo Kachru and he took me right up to Matric level. My brothers' Urdu teacher was Master Hukam Singh, from whom I also took lessons.

By the end of September, the tourist season in the beautiful valley would officially be over, and visitors would have left for their homes. So would the sons and daughters of officers studying in colleges in the plains. We would then find ourselves shut in the valley with only a few families, and consequently grew close to them. There were the families of Ministers in the Kashmir

government to meet, and doctors, businessmen, and politicians, and palace parties for our parents to attend. We made friends with their children, played and shared confidences irrespective of their religion. For there were several Ministers who were Muslims. There was Nawab Khusro Jang, Maulvi Nazir Ahmad, Abdul Qayyum, etc. The doctors similarly were from different religions, among whom I remember there being a Dr. Abdul Wahid whom my mother always referred to as Abdul Wahid who had a large family. There was a doctor named Abdullah, whose daughter Naima became our friend, and specially so after she joined Kinnaird College in Lahore, and I followed her there later.

What I noticed, even as a teenager, was that while girls from Muslim families were all our friends, the boys were kept apart, and though we saw them moving about and sometimes salaaming us, they didn't join our play groups, the only exception being Ejaz, the son of Minister Qayyum, who would visit us with or without his extremely beautiful mother Mahmuda, who was friends with my mother. Always a loner, Ejaz seemed to take his mother's early death very hard.

We lost sight of him for years, until I came across a news item in a local daily some years ago. Ejaz had committed suicide in London. We were all horrified and saddened.

Among our particular friends were Balraj Sahni, his brother Bhisham, and their several cousins, and when I say several, I really mean just that, for there were hordes of them. Balraj later came to be known as a film actor and a writer, having secured awards for both. Bhisham, now a great writer in both Hindi and English, was my classmate in Government College Lahore later. Though Balraj died, the rest of us who are still up and about remain 'thick as thieves', and meet in Bombay and

Delhi almost every year. In our fold now are also his nephews and nieces and their children and grandchildren.

India's Independence Movement, which had been triggered after the First World War when the British rulers had made promises of bestowing partial self-rule on us in return for utilising all kinds of our resources, in men and material, and then failed us, had gained momentum when the Jallianwala murders took place in Amritsar, in which all who attended a meeting were hacked to pieces by orders of Generals Dyer and O'Dwyer. Now, years later, the freedom movement was at its peak, with Mahatma Gandhi's launching of his 'non-violent non-cooperation' protest against foreign occupation of the subcontinent, and the resultant high-handedness of the rulers imposed on the country. We were directed to boycott all foreign imports, discard the foreign clothing which only fed their Lancashire mills, and impoverished India. Instead, we were asked to promote our cottage industry, take to hand-spinning as a symbol of our declaration of independence. The spinning wheel movement sprang up overnight, and wearing homespun clothing was taken to by all freedom lovers, Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Parsi alike, with enthusiasm. I refer to the Raja of Mahmudabad's statement made after the Jallianwala massacre: 'The interest of the country is paramount, whether we are Muslim or Hindu...'

We were united against a powerful foreign enemy. The All-India Congress was the common platform for all, and included people like Mr. M. A. Jinnah, Maulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal and Dr. M. A. Ansari, who held the presidency of Congress at one time.

Though removed from the mainstream of action in the distant, rarefied atmosphere of the Kashmir valley, the intense movement had managed to seep into every home, till all of us in



schools, colleges and at home were wearing khadi, cumbersome and heavy as it was, and feeling proud of being a part of the great movement. Some of the boys of our acquaintance even became active revolutionaries, and plunged right into the heart of the movement.

I remember one of our friends, a young boy named Prem Dutt (not to be confused with the great revolutionary Bhagat Singh's friend Dutt), who joined the same group, and gained instant fame by throwing a shoe at a magistrate in a Lahore court where the Bhagat Singh Conspiracy Case was under trial. He was confined to prison for years, where he turned himself into a linguist and scholar, with a long beard. He certainly made good use of his detention.

While many of the freedom fighters had returned their titles and their jagirs bestowed on them by the British rulers, my sole contribution to the non-violent movement was, perhaps, only in sticking to khadi apparel, and applauding the sacrifices of others.

Later, in '1920, tables started to be turned when the Arya Samaj leader Swami Daya Nand started his shuddhi movement with the mass conversion of some lower-class Muslims. This horrible move by one fanatic rightly angered and alienated the Muslims, until the newly-formed Muslim League broke up. Disgusted with the way things were turning, Jinnah took himself off to Engiand, and rermained there till 1937. On his return, he suggested the formation of a Muslim League-Congress Coalition, but failed to settle the terms. This was the first signal of the parting of the ways to come.

Those of us who were not old enough to absorb the implications of the political currents working in our midst



remained untouched. Brought up in the lush valley with dancing rivulets and prancing horses, those friends with whom we shared this experience will ever remain close to our hearts. We will remember the shared deep silences of winter, the haunting melodies like Goshe matija na no ringing through the hills, or hummed by a lovely paddy grinder—that vision of a celestial being—a young girl dressed in rags in a stance which would put a queen to shame.

Qudrat-Ullah Shahab was also about in the same sphere, his brother being a doctor in the State Hospital. He was a friend of my brother. Lately, wading through my books, I found two, *Silas Marner* and *Scenes of Clerical Life* by George Eliot, with the inscription, 'Presented by a friend to J.C.B. as a humble token of love for his literary intellect', signed Qudrat-Ullah Shahab, dated July 15, 1936.

Our family entered the valley in 1926 when my father was posted in the Civil Hospital there on his return from Edinburgh, where he had gone for his FRCS. I remember the first evening we walked into the house allotted to us. It was on the outskirts of the hospital in Srinagar in Mira Kadal area on the banks of the River Jhelum. My elder sister opened the windows of our bedroom, and there was the River Jhelum with *shikaras* (boats) plying on it, and the *manjies* (boatmen) singing lustily. There were only a few house-boats, mostly vacant, it being the month of November when visitors had long departed for warmer climes. The trees had shed their leaves, and stood in their bare majesty on the other side of the bank, while Mount Shankracharyas now known as Takht-i-Sulaiman, loomed in the distance, looking remote and yet approachable. We were awed, and fell under its spell. Friendships that we formed in such surroundings could not be torn from our hearts, nor the nostalgia wished away easily. It has become a part of us.

Sometimes, accompanying father on his nightly hospital rounds, I would see many Muslim women with their stomachs burnt. This kind of accident was common there, and was caused by *kangries* which the poor carried hidden under their gowns. A *kangri* is a kind of cane basket fitted with an earthen pot for holding coal covered with ash to provide warmth.

I asked my father how these people could be poor when the gorgeous valley they lived in was fragrant with rich saffron fields ripening under the sun, and factories around producing costly pashmina and lovely silks. How could any one lack for food either, when the trees were dripping with ripe cherries and peaches, and there in the fields grew luscious strawberries waiting to be picked. All this was theirs, wasn't it? They were the original inhabitants of the valley, weren't they? So why...?

My father sighed, as if under great pressure. 'I know what you mean. All this is theirs, and yet not theirs. You will understand when you grow up'.

'But do you understand?' I asked, puzzled.

'Probably not, or only partially. It is painful to see so much poverty,' he said, sighing.

'I don't want to wait till I grow up to know, and that also only partially. I want to know it all now, this minute,' and I burst out crying, because that day I had seen our driver Ghulam Mohammad, son of our Ayah Janan, carry his little sister into the hospital. Her stomach had third degree burns on it. Noori was a beautiful child of seven who would sometimes come to the house with Janan and play with me. I had taken her to heart, and so had my parents.

What would I learn when I grew up? As it happened, quite a lot, and that was mostly about my own helplessness to do anything for the people of the valley I loved so singlemindedly.

Visitors to Kashmir came from all corners of the world, and included unknown figures from the world of art and literature with whom we were to grow closer and closer as we grew. Among them were people like the famous poet of the continent Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum, Rashid Ahmad (later Director-General Broadcasting, Pakistan), artists like Ahmad Saeed Nagi, and S. N. Sanyal who was later to marry a first cousin of ours. Dr. Taseer came, and worked in the valley as Principal of the Sri Partap College after we had left.

And one day a visitor announced was Swami Daya Nand, about whose *shuddi* and *sangathan* programme we had heard of with extreme distaste. A fanatic amongst Arya Samajis, he had single-handedly been responsible for creating friction between the two major communities of India, Hindu and Muslim, and my father refused to have anything to do with him, to our delight. If I were to say that every Hindu of the times we knew felt the same way as my father did, perhaps I would not be correct. But if they felt any different, we younger members of the family had no means of knowing. It didn't, however, stop us from wondering why some Arya Samaji friends considered him worth entertaining.

Among my father's associates was the rebel Sheikh Abdullah, later known as the Sher-i-Kashmir, who was trying to wrest the rights of Muslims from the Hindu Raja Hari Singh. I remember his wife, the daughter of Kashmir's famous hotelier Nedou, who became a staunch Muslim. Her favourite song was:

*Muskumte ja rahe ho, dil ko tarpane ke bad.*

*Bijlian chamka rahe ho, phul barsane ke bad.*

There she would sit, confident of her expertise, surrounded by smiling faces while she ran her slender fingers over the keys of a harmonium. I refused to smile, because she had told my sister (with a wink) that I shouldn't be allowed to wear rouge at such a tender age. To disprove this unfair charge, I had washed and washed my face until it got redder and redder. No, I didn't smile. Instead I laughed and laughed at her accent.

We got to know many Kashmiri families. There was Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and his brother Majid, fond of clowning; there was Ghulam Sadiq. All these people, including Sheikh Abdullah, were dealers in pashmina, silks and carpets, and owned huge factories. They would hold rallies and demonstrations against the Dogra ruler of the state and his partisan policies. As the Chief Medical Officer of the state automatically became ex-officio superintendent of jails, Father in this capacity got to know and became very fond of these daredevils. If they smuggled cigarettes or notes in prison, Father would turn a blind eye to them.

Once he was summoned to the palace and charged with over-friendliness with Christians and Muslims. The Maharaja, who was fond of him, said to him, 'I hear you have a soft corner for them, and frequently share their meals also. As such, we refuse to have you at our table, or shake hands with you. You have become one of the untouchables for us.'

Father smiled, and said, 'Your Highness is right. I not only eat with them, but receive their vomit and their urine on my body when they are ill. But what worries me is that you, Your Highness, have been eating your meals with this untouchable of the lowest kind, and even embracing him. I think



by now you are equally contaminated. I am afraid nothing can purify you now. Please discuss with Swami Daya Nand how to get purified. He has a huge *shuddhi* programme. Maybe he can make you a Hindu again.'

Fortunately, the Raja saw the humour of the situation, and again folded him in his embrace. Since he was already contaminated, I suppose he thought one more time wouldn't matter.

In 1937 we had to leave Kashmir because of Father's health problems, and settled down in Lahore's Nisbet Road, near our grandparents. As by now we were all of us studying in Lahore, and going home to Srinagar only for our vacations in summer, we soon adapted ourselves to changed conditions. When our Model Town bungalow was built and ready to receive us, we shifted there in 1938.

### **Next Year Came the Second World War**

I was in Dalhousie convalescing after an attack of typhoid. I was also trying at the same time to work out a solution to a scrape I had got myself into through a disastrous marriage.

'We are at war,' I heard King George VI's voice announce. I looked at my counterpart in the episode of disaster and declared another war, on the personal front.

On returning to Lahore, I joined All-India Radio as a reader and selector of material for broadcasting. A few months later, I went through an interview to get into the regular cadre of AIR was selected and posted to Lahore where I shared an office with Hafiz Hoshiarpuri, the poet, and Agha Bashir Ahmad, who ended his career in Pakistan as Director of Pakistan Television in Lahore.



I found a flutter of activity at the station. War was on, and though not India's war, strictly speaking, our soldiers were fighting on all fronts. Every radio programme we put forward was geared to the raging war. There were messages to be sent overseas, and received, entertainment programmes to be planned and projected. No matter what programme portfolio we held, all of us had our hands into everything. Anyone could find himself (or herself) suddenly called upon to become an announcer, a newsreader, a writer, an interviewer or a producer at an instant's notice. The next moment the same person would be required to fulfil the duties of a public relations officer to important speakers or world famous personalities, scientists or historians, people like Professor Toynbee, writers like E. M. Forster, artistes like Ustad Bare Ghulam Ali Khan, or dancers like Uday Shankar or Ram Gopal—in fact the works.

We would scour the town to hunt for talent, from drawing rooms and clubs, from village *mailas*, and from the red-light area of Lahore, Hira Mandi (diamond market). We would pull out speakers from government offices, from women's associations, and children from their schools. An alert eye had to be kept out for spotting important visiting celebrities. The cars at our disposal would forever be on the roads, despite strict petrol rationing, even for buying presents and chocolates for performing children. On days of late evening transmission duty, I would take a servant along and grope my way through streets, pitch dark because of blackouts. All hours were working hours for us as broadcasting was an essential service. The more demanding the work, the closer we all drew, irrespective of our caste, creed, social status, or communities. We were knit in a camaraderie of a common heritage. All broadcasters became ours, whether they were visiting artistes or local ones, from Gangu Bai Hangal, Timir Baran or Begum Akhtar to classical dancers Uday Shankar and Ram Gopal, from poets Akhtar Shirani, Josh Malihabadi. Faiz Ahrmad Faiz, Miraji and editors of newspapers

and magazines. The station had recruited the most talented of the country's intelligentsia to its staff, which included writers like Krishan Chander, Mahmud Nizami, Rajinder Singh Bedi, in fact the top talent of the country. Petty problems which divided communities never had a chance with us. The dramatists we worked in close communication with were no less than Rafi Peer and Imtiaz Ali Taj.

The families we grew close to comprised almost the whole of Lahore—the Manzur Qadirs, the Fazal-i-Hussains, Justice M. H. Rehman and his brother Rahim. There were many Christian families, the Sondhis, the Chatterjis, the Singhas, the Bhanots, the Ram Chandras, etc., who were prominent educationists and our friends. We had a vast coterie of Hindu and Sikh friends also. There was N. Iqbal Singh, and K. S. Duggal, writers and colleagues. N. Iqbal Singh, the writer of *Andaman Islands*, was for some reason referred to as 'Tkki, my love', and is still called that. Duggal, several of whose books lie on my shelves, married a girl from a top Muslim family who is a doctor. There was the volatile and prolific writer Khushwant Singh, and his handsome wife Kanwal, great friends of my sister and brother-in-law Som, and bosom friend of Manzur Qadir, and his wife, my dear friend Asghari. In 1979, when I was a guest in her daughter's house in Washington, DC, along with my son, Asghari regaled him with stories of my college days, such as when cycling with my brother on Davis Road, we were laughing so much that we both fell off our cycles.

Life on the personal level soon ceased to be a bed of roses for me, in the wake of a couple of heart-rending deaths in 1942, so I made up my mind to leave Lahore, and opted for Lucknow. I found it just the place for shedding my blues, and was utterly enchanted with its aristocratic charm and old-world hospitality.

The music that emanated from Lucknow Studios was nothing short of pure inspiration. And no wonder. The artists at the disposal of the station were some of the topmost musicians of the era, people the subcontinent would boast of for ages to come. They were Ustad Alla-uddin Khan of Mahiar, sarod nawaz; Ustad Sundu Khan, sarangi nawaz; Ustad Fayyaz Khan, vocalist; the young upcoming Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, sarod nawaz, the son of the maestro Alla-ud-din Khan, with magic in his fingers. Surely he was on his way to vie with, and perhaps outshine his illustrious father Ravi Shankar, the sitar maestro. There was Rasoolan Bai with her melodious *thumries*, Akhtar Begum the enchanting singer with her sparkling *dadras* and *chaities*, and many others.

On several mornings I would wake up in the early hours and go to Ali Akbar's house to hear him practise in the next room, while I would sip tea with his wife, drowning myself in the music. On other mornings Akhtar Begum would breeze in, put me in her car, and take me home with her. Akhtar was married to a tall handsome barrister from a taluqdar family, Ishtiaq Hussain. 'I am keeping a tiger in my den,' Ishtiaq Bhai would say, referring to Akhtar's volatile artistic temperament.

At the studios, Rasoolan Bai would draw me into the music studio, and sing to me her latest *thumri*.

No, I was not in charge of the music section. I was put in the Features Section, where I was in close touch with the humorist Shaukat Thanvi. Shaukat Bhai was a dynamic writer, scribbling away while he talked, turning out four or five copies of his features, handing them to the seasoned actors in our live studio, while I sat on the control panel, manipulating the switches with trembling fingers. No rehearsal was possible. But our artistes coped, though I still shudder when I recall the nervous tension this caused.

The atmosphere at the office was friendly and relaxed, and conducive to creative activity. The window of my office looked out at a magnificent garden area, with a huge leafy tree with over-hanging branches. During barsat, it would gather into itself the darkness of the looming clouds, and scoop up the showers in its foliage, reluctant to let them go. I would watch the whole scene with fascination, and thought of it as an embodiment of the grandeur of the spirit of Lucknow.

Our broadcasters included the topmost intellectuals of the age living in the UP among whom were the great poet Firaq who was specially partial to me. There was Niaz Fatehpuri, Sibte Hasan, and my friend Dr. Rashid Jahan and her learned husband Dr Mahmud. Dr. Rashid Jahan was the sister of Khursheed Mirza of PTV fame. We would look forward to having a bite with her often, specially when she treated us to *besani roti* with *bhindi bhujia*. My friend Maya Sirkar was there, living on Cowper Road. Later she married M. Jamil, came to live in Pakistan with him, and worked as Reader (and then also as Head of the English Department) at Karachi University. Attiya Hussain, who was known as the number one beauty of Lucknow (who later became Attiya Habibullah and worked for the BBC in London), lived in Lucknow and since her sister-in-law Asif Rishad (the youngest daughter of Sir Fazal-i-Hussain of Lahore) was a close friend of mine, I came to know Attiya well.

But alas, my days in Lucknow were numbered, and approaching their end, because of my servant Bakhtiar Ali. My old family servant Ram Singh, who had accompanied me from Lahore, had left, and I had substituted him with Bakhtiar Ali. A war veteran, Bakhtiar Ali had been discharged from the army because of shrapnel wounds, and had become my cook-bearer. He was asthmatic, and stingy. One day I got annoyed with him.

I gave you a tenner a week ago. Why don't you spend it,



and give me variety in my breakfast? If you don't spend money, I'll have to let you go.'

'Dusehri mangoes I bought yesterday were one rupee a dhari (consisting of thirty-three mangoes). Where should I spend the money?'

'Besides,' I continued cruelly, 'you cough and cough and put me off my food. How long can I put up with this? You'll have to go, I'm afraid.'

'Only my dead body will leave this house,' he announced, and picking up the tray, left.

Bakhtiar Ali died that day, crushed under a military jeep while crossing the road to buy eggs. Carrying a Neville Chamberlain umbrella on that rainy day, he met his end, while those of us on transmission duty waited for him to bring us our elevenses.

In the servants' quarters his wife with one son and a couple of hens did not know about the accident. Nor did we, until a news item next day reporting a stray death brought it to our notice. We verified the news, and brought his umbrella home for his forlorn wife.

With the police force of the town behind me, Akhtar Begum's Barrister husband Ishtiaq Bhai as my counsel, and my journalist friend Jamal Kidwai as strong moral support, a campaign was lodged for getting adequate monetary reparation for the bereaved wife and son of Bakhtiar Ali. Since this necessitated my running around town at all hours of the day, I had to take days off from work. The Station Director, Jugal



Kishore Mehra (who later married the Muslim artiste, Anwer Begum or Paroji, and lived in Pakistan as Ahmad Salman) and I had a serious difference over this, to resolve which, the Director General, Mr. Ahmad Shah Bokhari, (Patras) came over to Lucknow himself. Though Jugal by this time had had second thoughts, I elected to go to Delhi with my old professor, and re-visited my beloved Lucknow only the next year (1944) to attend the wedding of my friend Maya with M. Jamil—still another intercommunal marriage. There seemed to be so many those days, the product of a common cultural integration over centuries of living together.

My friend Sadiqa (the sister of the film magnate W. Z. Ahmad who married an actress called Nina) had recently married a Hindu Barrister of Allahabad named Chander Shekher. Satnam (Dr. Satnam Charan Singh), another dear Sikh friend, had married Nawab Muzaffar Ali Khan's son Mahmud Ali Khan, and lived in Lahore with his family at the time. And all this on the personal front despite the deep clouds of dissent and disintegration gathering on the horizon. Then in 1945, Jamal Kidwai married a Sikh girl from a prominent family of the UP, Shakuntala Jaspal.

Coming to think of it all now, it seems ironic that so many of the intelligentsia should have been hunting for solutions other than those the politicians were engaged in finding. We all start life asking questions. But it seems the only ones who find clear cut answers are politicians—and computers, having been programmed that way.

The significant fact is that none of these marriages broke up, despite the various kinds of pressures they must have had to encounter during half a century of living together. Some record this, for the historian of the future to assimilate and ponder over. Nor did some others break up which took place within the next two years before 'the Great Divide' of 1947. These were of

two of my All-India associates, Iqbal Malik, and Batra with whom I was to share an office on my arrival in Delhi. Iqbal was to marry a Hindu Bengali girl, Amita Roy, also a colleague and a friend. Amita and I also shared living accommodation allotted to us by AIR in Babar Lane, Delhi. Batra became a Muslim to marry Khurshid, and went over to the BBC in London, where he became an OBE as Shahid Latif.

Our announcer at Lucknow station, Aley Hasan, who also migrated to London and joined the BBC, married a girl-friend, Krishna. This marriage broke up under special circumstances—an addiction in Aley being the cause. But he never recovered from the pain of the parting, he told me when I saw him last in 1968 at the BBC Club in London.

Then there was Krishan Chander, the short-story writer who married Salma, daughter of another famous writer, Rashid Ahmad Siddiqi, and started a happy period of married life, and continued to live happily with her till his death, which in other words means ever after.

In the meantime, political events were moving towards a different course. On March 23, 1940 came the Pakistan Resolution, with the demand of autonomy for units of Muslim predominance. Areas like the North-West Provinces were to be grouped together to constitute independent states in which these units would be autonomous and sovereign. The Cripps Mission of 1942 recognised the concept, but nothing came of it, as the Cripps offer did not meet the requirements of the Muslim League.

In 1945 the World War ended, and in August 1946 the League launched a programme of Direct Action to achieve Pakistan. It met strong resistance among its opponents in all

the provinces of the country. There were bloodbaths in Calcutta, Sylhet, Noakhali, and Tipperah, with forced conversion and abductions. Not all the efforts of the Muslim League and the Congress could stem the frightful image of hostility which loomed up to engulf the whole of the subcontinent. Many relationships built over the years fell prey to a new hatred and distrust, and a turmoil ensued.

I was in Lahore while all this was happening, and about to give birth to my baby. It was now the summer of 1947, and the date was April 12 when I had the first intimations to get to the hospital.

The hospital where I had been registered was the Aitchison, Lahore in the vicinity of Gwalmandi, where a friend of mine, Qamar Khan, was an RMO. The whole of Lahore was under curfew, and getting to the hospital was going to be a real problem. We required passes to get through the protected curfew area from Model Town, and did not have time to do so. I thus found myself being escorted to the hospital by my husband driving with a cigarette in his mouth and a double-barrelled gun by his side. Next to him sat his younger brother Saad Tarique (later a Major-General in the Pakistan Army), a bachelor, also with a gun and a cigarette, tense as tense could be. At the back sat the newly-married wife of our cook with me, inexperienced and hysterical. None of my escorts had any idea of what an exercise of this kind entailed. Thus we passed through a ghost-like Lahore, dark and sinister, smelling danger at every step. But no one stopped us, and thanking our stars we reached the hospital. My escorts, then ran to summon Dr. Qamar Khan from her room. She was taking a shower, and shouted to them to find nurses to carry me to the labour room. My husband and Saad went to the labour room, but found it completely deserted. The entire staff had run to see a huge fire which was raging in the area near the

hospital. They picked up a stretcher on their own and put me on it. I was put on a table with no one around except my own escorts, with the cook's wife screaming 'Hai Bibi ji' and crying loudly. Then Qamar came running, with her long wet hair covering her from head to-foot, and pushed the family out of the room just in time, and I sighed with relief. Within minutes the problem was over, and the swarming nurses and the head doctor were all recounting to me the stories of the fire around Gwalmandi in vivid details which I hardly heard, for a peaceful sleep was stealing over me.

By now Lahore was seething with political unrest and exploding in communal riots, mostly around the University area, hence they were termed 'the University riots'. The tension while the country waited for the announcement declaring Pakistan as an independent sovereign state was not only tangible but pulsating.

It was at this time that a wedding in my husband's family took us all to Delhi. It was early July, and my son was just over two months old. With me went a newly-employed ayah named Akhtar, who within days married a Hindu Brahmin and left me without any remorse.

After the wedding of my sister-in-law Bilqeas (who acquired a new name, Saba Zahir), on July 12 the rest of the family went back to Lahore, including my husband, while I staved back with my father and elder sister. Bilqeas stayed in Delhi because her husband Zahir Azar was on the Partition Committee along with M. Shoaib (later of the World Bank). She told me later that they had an armed guard of sixty to protect them, and to escort them two months later, up to Bombay.

On August 14, Pakistan was duly declared an independent



country, and the next day, British rule in India formally came to an end. India was at last free from the stranglehold of a foreign yoke after a long, long struggle. It was an occasion for great joy, but it was being spoilt by wide spread reports of looting and carnage from both parts of the subcontinent. Nevertheless, frantic preparations went on in New Delhi, the capital of India, to make August 15—India's day of Independence—an outstandingly festive occasion. No police were to be posted anywhere near the site of the celebrations, where an impressive rostrum was set up. Cars were parked for miles around the site, from where we had to walk to our seats. There on the rostrum stood a beaming Jawaharlal Nehru, the hero of the Independence Movement, now the new Prime Minister of the country, nodding and waving. Sitting around him were Sardar Patel and the other members of the Indian Congress hierarchy. There also sat Lord Mountbatten with his consort, the famous Lady Edwina. Everyone was smiling and seemed at ease. Speeches boomed on loudspeakers, while the audience laughed and clapped, clapped and laughed till all track of time seemed to be lost in the ensuing lighthearted banter and general friendliness. It certainly was a great day for the whole of the subcontinent to have been able to shake off the yoke which had long held the country in subjugation to a foreign power. But in the back of our minds was a painful reminder of something lacking in the Assembly. A large part of the stalwarts who had fought with the Indian Congress, and made sacrifices along with them for the freedom of the country, were missing. Suddenly a great cloud seemed to descend on me, till I was clutching my heart. Wildly I looked around, desperately trying to locate myself amongst all those carefree faces, and froze. Where in God's name was I? I shook myself with an effort, and stood up in a panic. I felt my sister's hand pull me to her lovingly till I was drawn to her lap with my head hidden in her neck. Horses seemed to be racing inside me, strutting against my chest relentlessly. Somebody had forsaken somebody



somewhere. Who, how, and why? Politicians seemed to have all the answers. Had I any?

Soon it was time to make a move. We wandered round for the best part of an hour looking for our car, and at last stumbled upon it by chance. We drove home in complete silence, looking unseeingly at the architectural splendour abounding all around, vast verdant lawns spread everywhere, fountains, fields, monuments. On reaching home, we found our compound full of people, cousins, friends and acquaintances who had arrived from different parts of the country, and some from Pakistan, among whom was my younger brother. Our family being an amalgam of both Hindu and Muslim cultures, we were to receive news from both sides, all heart-rending, stupefying, earthshaking.

Thenceforth, every day brought us blood-curdling stories. Trainloads of Muslims making for Pakistan were butchered, their women raped and inhuman indignities heaped on them. A prominent economist, Brij Narain, was murdered in Lahore. A prominent Muslim of India, Shafi Ahmad Kidwai, who had set up a refugee camp in New Delhi for the migrants, was butchered. Worried to distraction, we would try to book calls to Pakistan, but couldn't get through for the operators on both sides shouting 'Pakistan murdabad, or 'Jawaharlal Nehru murdabad'. Then would come a thud, cutting us off.

There was nothing for me to do except try and get to Pakistan. I was told there was a waiting list of 14,000 passengers with the airline, and the chances of getting to Pakistan alive were slim. My brother-in-law Som Nath Chib who had opted for Pakistan (the first Asian recipient of a Hall of Fame) but had been made to retract, somehow managed to get me a seat on September 3. All our friends and relations were appalled. They

appealed to my father to stop me from going, threw their pagries and hats at my feet, but my father held them back. 'She has her commitment to fulfil. Let her go.'

The scene I met at the old Lahore airport at Walton Training Centre was, to say the least, grim. There was a police cordon to stop all passengers from leaving the airport. While I stood bewildered, holding my screaming infant in my arms, a young Pakistani came up to me and said, 'Mrs. Shibli, I am Hadi, a pilot, and a friend of your husband. He asked me this morning to meet you and escort you home to Model Town. Please come with me.'

'My husband asked you? But he doesn't know, I mean how could he...?'

'I wouldn't know that,' and saying this he started loading my luggage in his car, put me in a seat next to him, and whisked me away.

Within minutes, I found myself deposited outside my brother-in-law Zubair's house in Model Town along with my luggage. I turned round to thank Hadi, but he seemed to have disappeared. Instead, I was surrounded by my sister-in-law and her family.

'There she is. She has come. Didn't we all say she would, and wasn't he right when he said it would be today?' And I was pulled into warm embraces, fed almonds, made to drink cold milk shake, while the baby was taken away somewhere to be kissed and cuddled.

'You must be exhausted, with your baby still an infant. Here, lie down and I will press your legs,' said my sister-in-law

Ismet, pushing me into a comfortable bed, and resolutely taking hold of my legs, disregarding all my protests.

'He is a clever manipulator, I must say. The way he talked me into giving up our six foot mali Omer to work for him, because he said he needs someone to look after you.'

'Who?' I ventured to ask, still in a daze.

'Who, indeed! Who else, except your husband?'

'But he couldn't possibly know my programme. I never. . .'

'Oh, he knew all right, believe me. There he is. You can see for yourself.'

And sure enough, there he was, jumping over the hedge of the lawn to join us, grinning.

He took us both, the infant and me, to my father's bungalow nearby. And as I entered, I found the house different. There was no furniture, no carpets, no curtains, only a couple of beds, without any bedding material on them. 'What...' I started to ask, but my husband hushed me.

'The house has been robbed through and through. But they didn't harm your younger brother. When your cousins brought along a chartered plane to take him to Delhi, they even came to bid him a warm goodbye.'

I was staggered. 'Who are "they" you are talking about?' 'It is the villagers from the nearby village of Bhavra. They looted the house, taking away everything.'

I was under too much shock to ask anything further and started to stare at the devastated garden outside. No flowers on the bushes, no leaves on the trees. 'Relax,' said my partner in life. Then I laughed through falling tears.

'Surely the trees haven't been robbed of their leaves by our Bhavra gangs?'

'No. That is the doing of the refugees who have come to Pakistan ailing. They saunter in from the Walton Training School refugee camp looking for lemons and other fruit, and stay to ravage the trees. They come daily, and I don't have the heart to stop them.'

'Of course,' I said, 'though why they should stay as you said, and pull off leaves from the trees is something I don't understand.'

'Remember, this bungalow is Hindu property, and they have been embittered. This is their way of finding vent for it. Please keep inside the house, and don't take a step outside. I am going to throw all your saris away. You must wear nothing but salwar suits from now on. As it is, I am having some problems with a Pakistani Major. He has lost some of his relations in India due to the bloodbath there, and keeps hounding me, asking me to hand you over to him as soon as you enter Pakistan. He must have learnt of your arrival by now, and if I know him, he will be back tomorrow. I told him he would have to walk over my dead body to get to you. Don't worry unduly. I am working on him and am soon going to make him understand our position. In the meantime, keep out of the way, for God's sake.'

I looked at him mutely, and was worried on both our accounts. What had we let ourselves into, I wondered.

That same night, Sardar Nihal Singh's servant next door was found murdered, and my security in the house tightened, but there was no earthly way to stop the baby from howling or gurgling when he wanted to. The Major came and went, heard the precious sounds of a happy baby, and slowly but surely started changing towards the indulgent father. Then his visits stopped, and we breathed freely.

I started to work in the Walton refugee camp. There I discovered all the quilts and the blankets which were missing from the house, and many other articles like suitcases which the Bhavra thieves must have spared, unless they were generous donors to the camp.

A few days later, Allah Jawai, who was an area masseur, appeared in our house, and offered her services. Besides which, she told me she had a message for me. It turned out to be a historic message sent to me by the Bhavra village thieves who had looted our bungalow. This is what Allah Jawai told me:

'They say we are sorry we had to rob you. As far as your Hindu property is concerned, we have vowed to leave you not a scrap. But your life we will protect with our own, have no doubt about that. It is not only because you have chosen to live here with us in Pakistan, but also because you are the daughter of a father who saved many of our lives, giving us medicines and medical advice free. Our loyalty is at your command.'

My God. What a country! What a people! My own now. Sentiments and loyalties, it seems, have a longer life than we give them credit for. With blood-bonds on both sides of the Divide, it is not easy for us to divide ourselves emotionally.



I must tell you of an old woman from Pakistan who recently travelled with me to Delhi.

'I wonder what the old city looks like now,' she mused. 'I am not even sure I will be able to recognise the mohalla where we used to live. They say everything is changed.'

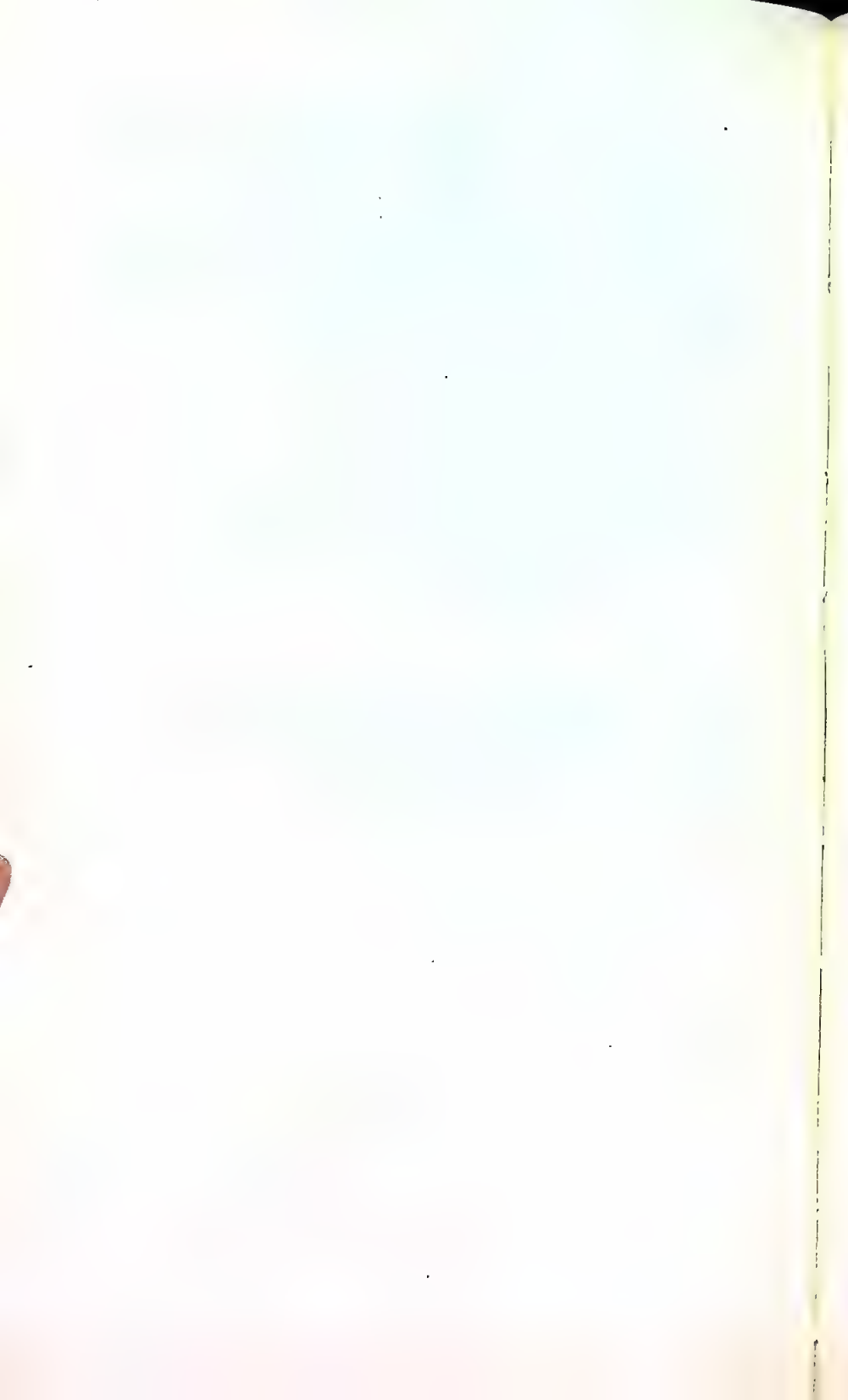
'Then this must be the first time you are visiting India since Partition?'

'Yes, it is, and my thanks are due to our neighbours the Murari Lals who sent me a ticket to visit Delhi.'

'How have you kept in touch with them for so long?' I asked.

'The family has been visiting Pakistan frequently. During their last visit here, they asked me why I never visited India. They said they had arranged my visa, and would be sending me a ticket soon. This is the result, and I am now able to visit them in Delhi. I have an old sister there whom I never expected to see, but for this gesture of my old friends and neighbours.' I saw the old woman wiping her eyes.

No, it hasn't been easy for blood relations to be on different sides of the Divide, and be called upon to divide themselves emotionally. Perhaps it will, at some point, occur to the enlightened elements of both sides that this very emotion can be used to form the basis of a harmonious relationship. Till then we will have to stay positioned as we are and remain 'Either, Neither, or Both'.



# What We Lost to Taste Freedom

## B.A. Chowdhry

With freedom came tears, pain, despair, and destitution. What we lost to taste freedom.

On September 13, 1947, I set out on a mass evacuation duty across the international boundary of India and Pakistan. The convoy consisted of civilian trucks headed by a military escort and I had under my command a posse of ten soldiers in uniform. The destination we were to reach was Nakodar- Mehatpur refugee camp.

At the starting point from Lahore, the convoy trucks were brimming with non-Muslim refugees to be taken to Amritsar. As we moved along, we saw Lahore wearing a deserted look. Columns of smoke were rising high up in the sky from all around the residential areas, making the atmosphere gloomy, and dull.

We left behind the outskirts of the city and saw roads littered with dead bodies on the one hand, and on the other crowded, wild-looking, maimed, starved mankind clad in torn, dirty rags.

As we proceeded further still, a pile of dead bodies on both sides of the road stretched for miles. There was no time to perform funeral rituals, since deaths were occurring at brief intervals in virtually every family due to the cholera epidemic. The dear departed ones were stacked on roadsides heartlessly, with no display of emotion or tears, since these faculties had vanished in the face of utter horror let loose on the fugitives by gangs of Sikh militants. These gangs were assaulting Muslim caravans and convoys, abducting young girls, looting leftover belongings and massacring old and young indiscriminately.

We reached Amritsar in the afternoon and stopped at Company Bagh. Here Muslim refugees constituted a majority of the refugees. The Bagh, once a recreational green spot, had been converted into a plain ground. We were not allowed to continue our journey by the local authorities till the next day because night had fallen and the convoy was scheduled to be reloaded with Sikh refugees to drop on our way.

There were frenzied activities throughout the night in an effort to get on the trucks. We left at about 7 a.m. and treaded through the crowd and started the journey at a trotting pace. As far as the eyes could see, dead bodies were lying, their odour making it very hard to breathe. The sky above was overcast with birds, spiralling to feed on dead flesh. Amid this scenario, we kept our onward journey.

We reached Jalandhar shortly after dusk, which presented an unsettling sight. The Sikhs, flashing their swords, looked aggressive and were rearing to ambush the frightened Muslims who had huddled together to save their lives and honour.

Next morning, we once again resumed our journey with loads of refugees to be dropped en route. When we came across Partapra camp, a Muslim refugee enclave, news had already spread that an evacuation party from Pakistan was nearby. The entire camp swarmed around and begged an immediate evacuation or at the least requested protection from the bandits. Our final stop was only a few miles away: Nakodar which was equally depressing. But having safely deported the passengers, we decided to return the next day. I was in the grip of a severe headache and was taking a stroll at the outskirts of the camp, when I noticed soft feet following me and I heard a feeble voice pleading with me not to go any further since the lurking Sikh bandits would shoot at sight. I stopped to see a sobbing young girl aged 18 with a small bundle in her hands. She addressed me, "Salaam Sahab ji, take me with you."

"Where to?," I inquired. "Pakistan," she said. "Everyone in my family has been murdered by the Sikhs and I am the only one left alive." She pushed the small bundle towards me which carried her family ornaments. She said if she had anything more, she would certainly have offered it; tears coursed down her cheeks throughout our conversation.

I returned the bundle to her and advised her that she should keep it with her in safe custody, since she would need them more in Pakistan and told her that she should see me the next morning just before our departure. She seemed disappointed that I did not accept her offerings, and disappeared in the dying and barely living humanity in the camps.

We left at daybreak with refugees, seeking safe haven in Pakistan. I was the last person on the convoy to leave. I caught sight of the girl leaning against a sheesham tree, holding her bundle with both her hands. I called her to my truck and she came running, sure in the knowledge now that she would reach her destination.

When we approached Amritsar, a Baloch regiment was stationed to regulate the incoming flow of refugees. The jawans of the regiment greeted us with a fistful of atta for each one of the refugees, in addition to some hearth and firewood. This was followed by an excited activity specially by the womenfolk. They got down from their respective trucks, and began to prepare bread. The girl I had favoured on compassionate grounds was the first one out of the lot to offer a *roti* to me: a gesture to pay back her debt.

We reached the Wagha border post at about dusk with, all the convoy members shouting hoarsely 'Pakistan Zindabad' freedom greeting them on the new land.





# **The Bloodshed Could Have Been Avoided**

**Madan Lal Khurana**

Freedom was a dream for all, but bloodshed was a nightmare that should not have happened. Delhi's former Chief Minister writes about his family's exodus from Lyallpur in 1947.

I owe my life to an unknown Gurkha jawan but for whose bravery and presence of mind, I would have never escaped the clutches of death. Whenever I think of that train journey, when there was human carnage all around me during the partition riots, I cannot but thank this young soldier who jumped in and saved many lives.

I was just about 11 years old. I had just passed my fourth standard exams, and we were staying near Anarkali Bazaar in Lyallpur, West Punjab when the riots of 1947 broke out. I saw the naked dance of death, the arson and the mindless looting happening right in front of me. Hindus and Muslims were thirsty for each others' blood. On the one side, there were young Hindu boys, armed with swords and pistols, and on the other side, there were the Muslim youngsters, both sides busy inciting people with their slogans and speeches, beseeching their people to kill everybody on the other side. I remember the days when we used to keep a midnight vigil so that our locality was not attacked, so that we did not lose anybody from our locality.

In September, we were taken to a refugee camp in the DAV school nearby. One day, there was an attack on our camp late in the night and many hapless people were killed mercilessly. We were put in a special train from Lyallpur to Amritsar. It stopped at every place. That day, the train had stopped in the

middle of a jungle, there was no station. I was young and in the middle of the night I felt very thirsty. I still remember how all of us were forced to drink the dirty water from a rain clogged pond.

There were about half a dozen Gorkha jawans in our train. When it reached Lahore, there was an attack on us. For about half an hour, there was an exchange of fire from both sides and all through this, we simply remembered our gods. There was nothing much we could do and there was also this realisation that the jawans on our train could not have held on for a long time.

It was at this point of time that one of those jawans jumped out of the train, ran up to the driver's cabin, put his revolver against the driver's forehead and threatened him to start the train immediately. There were more mobs on the way to Amritsar and therefore, they decided to divert the train to Ferozepur via Kasur. We were thus saved, but I can never forget that half an hour in our life when we were literally hanging between life and death. If it was not for that young soldier, none of us would have survived that ghastly attack.

We had a tough time in the refugee camp in the DAV school. Whenever we used to hear the sorry tales of people pouring into the camp from the nearby areas, life became even more miserable for us. All the women in one village were thrown into the village well to escape the clutches of the rioting mob. So many of our people were killed and all those who escaped the killing mob, thanked their stars only after they reached the camp.

I still remember that when we left our homes, we had gone to the camp with just a couple of things which we needed

for our daily routine. It never occurred to us that we were leaving our homes forever. There were many families who did not mind remaining in Pakistan because they had lived there all their lives and they did not want to leave their ancestral places. But when they saw that their daughters were no longer safe in the face of the rioting mob, they were forced to come out.

Freedom came but it did not bring anything for us. When the entire nation rejoiced in this new-found freedom, for us there was death all around us. It was no time for us to feel happy. So many of our people were killed.

I am of the opinion that if Pakistan was inevitable, before it was made, all of us should have been told well in advance that all those who wanted to be in Pakistan should remain there and all those who wanted to go to India should cross over. If only they had made this announcement before it was too late, there would not have been so many deaths. Where were all those assurances that were given? Hundreds and millions of our people stayed back just because of Nehru's assurances. And look what happened to so many of them.

But even after all these years, I am sure that the strong bonds of love are still intact between the people. I give one example. I once appeared in Rajat Sharma's *Aap Ki Adalat* on Zee TV. In his introduction at the beginning of the show, Rajat mentioned that I was born in Lyallpur in 1936. You cannot imagine my happiness when Rajat told me a couple of days later that Zee TV had received hundreds of letters from Lyallpur congratulating me for attaining such a high position in India. They were all very proud of me. The sentiments of the people across the border are still there and this is the only encouraging thing in these days of tension and hatred.

It is unfortunate that even after 50 years of independence, we are still to reach Mahatma Gandhi's goal of Swarajya. We may have got independence from the British, but we still have a long way to go for Swarajya. The power in our country is still centred around a handful of people and we are still to decentralise power. Our villages are still to rejoice in Swarajya even after 50 years of independence. More than 45 per cent of our people are still languishing below the poverty line and there is no one to take care of them. All the time, we cry ourselves hoarse about economic liberalisation but not a single kilowatt of power has increased in our villages. Ice cream may be in plenty in our cities, but what about the needs of our brethren in the villages? We talk of having gained so much, but have we ever thought about the cost of all these things? At what cost is all this development that we keep referring to?



## ***Five***



## **The Partition, 1947**

### **Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan**

While at Delhi, I was sent for by Mr. Jinnah, who asked me to argue the Muslim League case when the Boundary Commission to delimit the boundary between West Punjab and India — at that time, between West Punjab and East Punjab — was set up. Without any hesitation, I took on that duty.

So, back from London, I went straight to Lahore, where the Boundary Commission had in the meantime been constituted. During my stay in England it had been announced that Sir Cyril Radcliffe would be the umpire of the Punjab and Bengal Boundary Commissions. This meant that the boundary would be determined on a unanimous or a majority report of the commission concerned, but in case of a tie the umpire's decision would prevail. In each case there was bound to be a tie as each of the commissions was composed of two Muslim and two non-Muslim members. The two Muslim members of the Punjab Boundary Commission were Mr. Justice Din Mohammad and Mr. Justice Mohammad Munir, while Mr. Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan and Mr. Justice Teja Singh represented the non-Muslim side. There was bound to be deadlock in a commission composed on such a basis. So, in effect, it was boundary in each case.

I believe it was Monday evening when I reached Lahore. I was told that Sir Cyril Radcliffe was already in town and had summoned the parties to meet him at 11 o'clock, the next morning. So we appeared before him; he gave us directions and fixed noon of the following Friday as the time-limit for the parties to put in their written cases before the Commission. The following Monday arguments were going to start before the Commission. He said he himself would not sit with the

Commission in order to hear arguments because he was not sure whether at all his function as umpire would come into play. It was only after the Commission had made its report that he would come to know whether he would be called upon to function at all. But he would follow with great interest whatever was being argued before the Commission, as a transcript of the proceedings would be sent to him daily.

The next evening Mr. Justice Din Mohammad came to see me. He was very agitated and said, "I have a strong suspicion that the boundary line has already been decided upon and all of us are going to be engaged in a farce." I asked him why he thought so. He said that after we had left the previous day, Sir Cyril had mentioned that he would be going up the next morning on a flight to survey the area in dispute and to see how the land lay. Mr. Din Mohammad had asked him how the Commission would know what he had looked at and what impressions he had formed. They would be sitting in Lahore while he would have made a survey of which they would have no knowledge. This might prove awkward later on. Sir Cyril explained that the aircraft placed at his disposal was a small one but that two of them, one from each side, could go up with him. It was decided that Mr. Justice Munir and Mr. Justice Teja Singh would accompany him the next morning. So, the next morning all of them assembled at an early hour at Walton Airport but the flight was abandoned because of a dust storm. Just before leaving the airfield, Mr. Justice Munir asked the pilot where they were to go. He put his hand in his pocket and brought out a slip of paper which he gave to Mr. Justice Munir saying those were the orders. Mr. Justice Munir brought that slip and gave it to Mr. Justice Din Mohammad. It carried directions to the pilot. He was to fly east as far as Pathankot where the Ravi emerges from the mountains and debouches into the plains of the Punjab and then he was to veer left towards Ferozepur.

Justice Din Mohammad was very sure that this was going to be the boundary. He could not see any other reason in going to a particular point and then following a definite course. It was not a flight over an area, it followed a definite line. Therefore, he decided to go to Delhi the same night and put the matter before Mr. Jinnah, suggesting that Munir and he should resign from the Commission on the ground that apparently the whole thing had been determined in advance. He thought that would result either in the appointment of a new commission or in the application of some other method to determine the boundary.

I told him I feared Mr. Jinnah might dismiss the whole thing as he would not be easily persuaded unless the whole matter was put to him on some legal basis. He said "What do you mean by legal basis"? I answered, "I don't know whether you'll succeed with him even then but I suggest you to put to him this aspect of the case: We have accepted Sir Cyril Radcliffe as umpire in the case and we are bound to accept his decision as umpire. But, as umpire, it is his duty to base his decision on such material as is submitted to him by the Commission. As umpire, he is not entitled to receive material from other sources or give any consideration to such a material. A decision can only be made on the basis of the material which the parties place before the Commission: that material along with the views of the Commission will be submitted to Sir Cyril Radcliffe and on that, together with the Prime Minister's announcement as providing the basis of the partition, he must make up his mind. Now, who suggested this trip to him? He knows nothing at all of the conditions here, he does not even know the parties' case. What is the meaning of this particular line that the flight was to follow? Mr. Jinnah should try to find out what lay behind this proposed trip which had to be abandoned and what the significance of the line is. If he is satisfied that it had no significance at all, though it's difficult to believe that a definite



line like that should have no significance, then matters may proceed. But if he is not satisfied, he should ask for an explanation: From which direction did this suggestion proceed? He can then make his point that the umpire is being influenced in a particular direction by people who are not directly concerned with this question and we have lost confidence in this procedure. That might perhaps go some distance with Mr. Jinnah, otherwise you may not entertain much hope merely because of this slip of paper."

He went to Delhi that night, Mr. Jinnah, left Delhi in the evening, arrived back in Lahore on Friday morning and came straight from the railway station to see me. He was very crestfallen: Mr. Jinnah had told him to go ahead and to do his best and not to worry. Sir Cyril was a responsible man and would not let his mind be influenced by any outsider.

Curiously enough, when the award was announced the boundary followed the line described in the slip of paper except for one change, again, adverse to Pakistan. I shall come to that later.

On my return from England when I arrived at Lahore on Monday evening, I was received at the railway station by a large number of people including the Nawab of Mamdot. He told me that at 11 o'clock the next morning we were going to see Sir Cyril Radcliffe and that later the same day, I would be meeting some lawyers at 2.30 p.m. at his residence. I presumed that I would be meeting the lawyers who had been engaged in the preparation of the case, for I had been assured by Mr. Jinnah that by the time I arrived at Lahore, I would find the whole case ready and I would only have to take on its presentation on the basis of the brief prepared by the lawyers.

So, under that impression, at 2.30 I presented myself at Mamdot Villa, the residence of the Nawab of Mamdot. I found there a large number of lawyers most of whom I knew very well as personal friends and colleagues. Earlier, during our meeting with Sir Cyril in the morning he had fixed Friday noon as the deadline for filing written cases. So after the usual hand-shakes and greetings, we sat down and I enquired which of them were working with me on the case. Khalifa Shuja-ud-din, a senior lawyer, smiled and said, "Which case?" "The boundary case, of course. I was asked to meet the lawyers working on the boundary case this afternoon here." Khalifa Shuja-ud-din replied that they knew nothing at all about the boundary case. He was at a loss to understand what I was talking about. The lawyers were there only to welcome me back to Lahore and to wish me success in the case.

To say the least, I was stunned not only to know that nobody had been paying any attention to the case, much less preparing it, but at the alarm that within less than three days—it was already the afternoon of Tuesday — I would have to present a case in writing, on the partition of this part of the country. I did not know which way to turn for statistics or any other relevant materials to ascertain the principles on which the line should be drawn or on what ground to prepare the case.

Within a few minutes I said goodbye to the assembled lawyers and asked the Nawab of Mamdot, whether the Muslim League Organisation had prepared any plan or collected any material or done anything in this direction. He uttered a laconic 'No.'

Khawaja Abdur Rahim, who was then the Commissioner of Rawalpindi was staying at Lahore on a special duty in connection with the large influx of refugees that had already

started pouring in from the other side. He had certain statistics on population prepared on his own. He came to see me the same afternoon and handed over the material to me. This was a piece of sheer good luck. I also found that four lawyers had come to Lahore from other towns, hoping that they might be of some use to me in the preparation of the case. Mr. Nisar Ahmed and Sahibzada Nusrat Ali came from Montgomery; Syed Muhammad Shah from Pakpattan and Chaudhry Ali Akbar Khan (later Pakistan's Ambassador at Jiddah) from Hoshiarpur. There were also a couple of junior lawyers from Lahore; they would occasionally look in and were able to assist, not so much with the preparation of the case, but on other odd matters requiring assistance. I am very grateful to all of them for their devoted help.

My anxiety now was to work day and night and get the case ready by Friday noon. Even now, looking back I cannot explain how it was possible for us to produce a case which we did by the Friday noon.

At that time, conditions in Lahore were topsy-turvy; the paramount anxiety was how to handle the refugee problem. Were it not for the people who rose to the occasion as a body, I am sure, the principal government would have proved absolutely unequal to the task and the administration would have foundered. It was the spirit of the people that carried us through. We also owe much to a few devoted officers and workers like Khawaja Abdur Rahim and his colleagues who were dealing with this influx of refugees. Train-loads came in, the dead and the wounded children with their eyes gouged out and hands cut off, women with their breasts chopped off — such savagery and inhumanity.

I imagine the same things happened on the other side

too. The Punjab seemed to have become a howling wilderness of beasts rather than a land of human beings. All humanity had disappeared, all mercy and pity and human love and affection seemed to have evaporated. Altogether a dreadful business; I hate to recall it. Under such conditions, it was not surprising that everybody was at his wit's end and nothing could be arranged for certain.

Before leaving Mamdot Villa, I had requested the Nawab to arrange that by 8 o'clock the next morning I should have two stenographers to work in relays at my lodging which was opposite the villa. I had also asked for the usual office equipment: pencils, paper, typewriters, etc. He had assured me that everything would be there by 7.30.

So I came back and started working on the available material and worked late into the night. I started again early in the morning, then I got ready, had my breakfast and at 7.30 I inquired whether the stenographer had arrived. There was nobody; eight o'clock, nobody. Not a pencil, not a sheet of paper, not a typewriter or a stenographer! Again, I had recourse to Khawaja Abdur Rahim, whose tent-office was just across the road. He was kind enough to send his two stenographers.

On Thursday night, when I had got the draft ready, I insisted that at least two of the Muslim League leaders Mian Mumtaz Daultana and Sirdar Shaukat Hayat Khan should come and read through it. I was submitting a case on behalf of the Muslim League and somebody on behalf of the League held to give me instructions. I dare not submit a case which might afterwards be repudiated. Sir Shaukat Hayat Khan could not come; he had high fever. Mian Mumtaz Daultana very kindly came along. He said it was not necessary for him to read the draft as they had full confidence in me; however, I told him that



it was not a matter of confidence but a matter of instructions and I had to have them from somebody. I insisted upon his reading through the draft and putting his imprimatur on it. He was kind enough to do it saying that he agreed entirely with it. The next morning, after adding some final touches to it, I was able to deliver the document to the Commission.

Immediately afterwards, I went to the Friday Service at a mosque where I was asked to take the service. I earnestly urged the congregation to be diligent in prayers as I feared that in certain parts of the Punjab Muslims would have to face the days in Spain under Isabella and Ferdinand. Unfortunately, that apprehension proved to be too well-founded.

The next Monday arguments started before the Commission. The case was argued very well on all sides. The Hindu case was put by M.C. Setalvad, who was the Attorney-General of India. He had been asked to come from Bombay and was assisted by very competent lawyers including Bakhshi Tek Chand, who was a retired Judge of the Lahore High Court and had been for many years the ablest lawyer at the Lahore Bar. The Sikh case was put by a gentleman who became later the Advocate-General of East Punjab. It is not necessary to go into details about what was said, hut the main contest centred round Gurdaspur District Ferozepur District and parts of Jalandhar District. The crux of the matter was how to interpret and apply the expression 'contiguous Muslim majority areas'.

We based our case on adopting tehsil or sub-district as the unit for the purpose of determining contiguous majority areas. One could take a village as a unit hut that would have resulted in a completely crazy boundary line. It was not possible to determine by villages where the majority on one side ended and began on the other. Then, one could take a police station



as a unit, but even that was too small to give us a workable boundary line. So, one could take a subdistrict, as we did, or one could take a district as a unit. The choice was a difficult one.

If a district were taken as a unit the notional partition which had already been put into effect for the purpose of administration ad interim, would have to be confirmed and that would give the whole of the Gurdaspur District to Pakistan. But the risk was that if we confined our case to districts, it might be assumed that we were happy with the notional partition and our claim might be whittled down further to our serious prejudice. Adopting the tehsil as a unit would give us the Ferozpur and Zira tehsils of Ferozpur District; the Jalandhar and Nakodar tehsils of Hoshiarpur District. The line so drawn would also give us the state of Kapurthala (which had a Muslim majority) and would enclose within Pakistan the whole of Amritsar District of which only one tehsil, Ajnala, had a Muslim majority. It would also give us Shakargarh, Batala and Gurdaspur tehsils of Gurdaspur District. One could also take as units what, in the Punjab, are known as *doabs*, that is to say, the areas between two rivers. If the boundary had gone by *doabs*, we could have got not only the sixteen districts which, under the notional partition, were later, given to us, but also Gurdaspur District and Kangra District in the mountains.

Had any of these units been adopted the boundary line would have been more favourable than what it is now.

Everybody knew it already that there was going to be no unanimous or majority report. The non-Muslim Commissioners took one view while the Muslim Commissioners had just the opposite view. Consequently, the umpire had to give his award. After studying the record he held discussions with the members

of the Commission at Simla. We were told by the Muslim Commissioners that while Sir Cyril was not quite definite about Gurdaspur District, he was quite clear that the two sub-districts of Ferozepur District—the sub-district of Ferozepur itself and the sub-district of Zira—being Muslim majority areas and contiguous to the rest of the Muslim block would form part of Pakistan.

During the days when the award was expected, Sir Evan Jenkins, the Governor of the West Punjab, received a communication on the phone from Mr. Abel, Lord Mountbatten's private secretary. This communication was based on two documents drawn up by Mr. Beaumont, a private Secretary of Sir Cyril; one of them showed the boundary line on a map while the other described it from village to village. The Governor was told that this was the award and that it would be announced within forty-eight hours. He was asked to get in touch with his chief of police and take necessary measures to give effect to the award when it was announced. There is no doubt that a similar communication must have been sent to Mr. Trivedi, the Governor of East Punjab. But no award was announced within forty-eight hours. As a matter of fact, the award was not announced for eight or ten days. By that time Sir Cyril Radcliffe had left the subcontinent.

The notes of the communication, taken down by Sir Evan Jenkins showed the two sub-districts of Ferozepur and Zira, as we had been expecting, formed part of the West Punjab and consequently of Pakistan. But eight or ten days later when the award came out these two sub-districts were put in India. No explanation for this change has ever been given. I have already hazarded one: I hazard it again for the purpose of this record. It appears to me that unless a clear and convincing explanation comes forth to displace this hypothesis, what I am going to say

is the only thing that might have happened. We must remember that at that time there was no Pakistan and consequently, no Pakistan Government. There was only the Provisional Government of India headed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as its Prime Minister.

Mr. Trivedi, the Governor of East Punjab, as an ICS officer, was under the authority of the Provisional Government; so was Sir Evan Jenkins, the Governor of West Punjab. It stands to reason that on receiving the communication from Mr. Abel he conveyed its gist, probably through a personal visit, to the Prime Minister. The inclusion of Ferozepur sub-district in Pakistan meant the inclusion of the headworks of the Sutlej Valley canal system, situated just outside the town of Ferozepur. The entire water from these headworks went to Pakistan and Bikaner one of the Indian states; the division being on the proportion 83 per cent and 17 per cent respectively.

The states of Bikaner and Jaisalmer, both in Rajputana, being contiguous of both Pakistan and India, could accede to either of the countries. It was no secret that the rulers of both the states were inclined to accede to Pakistan as they expected a better deal from Pakistan rather than India.

The canal from Ferozepur Headworks to Bikaner, being the only irrigation system of the state, was almost its lifeline. So, coupled with the Maharaja's personal desire to accede to Pakistan the inclusion in Pakistan of the headworks controlling the canal would have been the decisive factor in the state's accession to Pakistan. In view of this contingency the inference that Mr. Nehru must have approached Lord Mountbatten to procure a modification of the award is almost irresistible. There is no other reason why the award was modified when it had been communicated to the Viceroy, to Mr. Abel, to Sir Evan Jenkins and to Mr. Trivedi and consequently the umpire had

become *functus officio*, having no longer any authority to modify it. The whole matter did not come to the knowledge of the Pakistan authorities until months later, whereas, presumably, from the very outset, it was within Mr. Nehru's knowledge, through Mr. Trivedi. The Governor of West Punjab owed no duty to anyone, except the Central Government of India headed by Mr. Nehru. Mr. Trivedi also owed no duty to anyone except Mr. Nehru. So it was quite right on the part of Mr. Trivedi to let Mr. Nehru know what was happening while the Governor of West Punjab was under no such obligation to anyone on the Muslim League side since Pakistan had not yet come into existence and nobody on that side had any right to know in advance what the award was going to be.

The inclusion of Gurdaspur District in East Punjab was a great blow to us; it facilitated the Indian intervention in Kashmir, as from the plains only Gurdaspur District could give the Indians an access to Kashmir. It had four sub-districts. Shakargarh to the west of the Ravi was included in Pakistan while the three sub-districts, that is, Batala, Gurdaspur and Pathankot being to the east of the Ravi were included in India, giving India an access to Kashmir, through the plains. In Gurdaspur District as a whole, Muslims were in a majority. In the sub-districts taken separately they enjoyed a majority in the tehsils of Shakargarh, Batala and Gurdaspur but in Pathankot, they were in a minority. With Batala and Gurdaspur going to Pakistan, the Pathankot tehsil would have been isolated and blocked. To get access to Pathankot would have been possible for India through the Hoshiarpur District but it would have taken long to construct roads, bridges, communications, so necessary for military movements.

The modification of the award relating to the Ferozepur and Zira tehsils led directly to the Indus waters dispute. India,



having obtained control of the headworks at Ferozepur, could easily turn off the waters and so it did giving rise to the dispute. Thus ultimately the two disputes between India and Pakistan resulted from the two portions of the award, that could not be justified on any basis whatsoever.

As part of the machinery for sorting out things in connection with the partition, a tribunal had been set up for the distribution of assets, under the chairmanship of the ex Chief Justice of India, Sir Patrick Spens, now Lord Spens. The tribunal heard the parties, sorted out the assets, assessed what was due from one side to the other, and gave its award. In making its assessment, it took into account the Indian claim that the irrigation system in the old, undivided province of the Punjab had been much better developed in the portion which had gone to Pakistan. This development having taken place at the expense of the whole of the province and the benefit of its major portion having gone to Pakistan, it was claimed that Pakistan must pay compensation for the excess share of the developed system now enjoyed by it. The tribunal took that into account in making its award and compensated India for obtaining a smaller share of the joint development that had been made at joint expense. Lord Spens stated publicly that the award of compensation to India was based on the assurance given to the tribunal by the Attorney-Generals of India and Pakistan that existing uses of the water from these rivers would not be interfered with.

The day after the tribunal had made its award, India diverted the waters at the Ferozepur headworks asserting that Pakistan was no longer entitled to the waters of the Beas and Sutlej Rivers. So, at its very birth, Pakistan was threatened with extinction, as without these waters the greater part of West Pakistan would be turned into a desert.



On May 4, 1948, a provisional agreement was concluded between the Governments of India and Pakistan. It provided that, leaving the legal position aside, India would not hinder the flow of waters into Pakistan for a period, but that it would have to be progressively reduced and Pakistan, in the meantime should investigate alternative sources of substitution for these waters. This agreement was subject to the condition that Pakistan would pay into the State Bank of India or any other specified bank, a certain assessed amount in escrow and that India would take the amount as compensation for the use of the waters by Pakistan, if the final decision should be in favour of India. Later, India took up the position that Pakistan was not entitled to any part of these waters and India, as the upper riparian was entitled to divert the whole of the waters for its own benefit without any regard to the historical uses which had already been established.

Mr. David Lilienthal who had been Chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority was on a visit to the subcontinent and happened to fly over the Indus Valley. He wrote an article for the *Saturday Evening Post*, bringing about the possible consequences of the dispute. He drew particular attention to its impact on the economy of West Pakistan and suggested that the World Bank should offer its good offices to the parties in order to resolve this dispute on the basis of certain principles which should be accepted by both sides, namely that the established practice used should be respected, that if extra water was available from all these rivers, there should be an agreement on its use for the development of the whole of the Indus Basin (including both, the Indian and the Pakistani parts) and that was how the cost of such development should be apportioned.

Both the sides accepted the World Bank's good offices and there was a prolonged series of investigations and

discussions. At long last an agreement was reached, was incorporated into a treaty and is now being worked out on the spot. One part of the agreement was that India should enjoy the waters of the eastern rivers and Pakistan should meet its needs from the western rivers by means of replacement works and channels: India paying the cost of the replacement. But when the cost was assessed, India said it could not afford to pay that much. Through the good offices of the World Bank it was arranged that it should pay as much as it could afford and the rest should be made up by friendly powers like the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, etc. So far as projects for the future use as distinguished from the established use were concerned, Pakistan was to bear the cost of its own works and India was to bear the cost of works on its own side.

I understand that some difficulty has since arisen. The basis on which the costs of replacement were calculated is completely changed because of the rising prices. I believe negotiations are going on with the Bank in this direction.



## **In Lahore.....**

### **Jahanara Shah Nawaz**

The exodus of Hindus and Sikhs from the Punjab had started, and caravan after caravan of them was leaving the cities and rural areas of West Pakistan. Suddenly, similar caravans of Muslims started arriving from East Punjab and other places. The two governments were to be installed, one in New Delhi and the other in Karachi, on August 14, 1947, and Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Viceroy, was to address the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. Lord Radcliffe had been holding meetings and the cases of different parties had been placed before him with facts and figures by outstanding lawyers. People were anxiously awaiting the announcement of the Radcliffe Award.

Tazi and I left for Karachi on August 9, 1947, and we stayed at the Palace Hotel, where a number of other members of the Assembly were also staying. Quaid-i-Azam was to take the oath as Governor-General of Pakistan on the 14th morning and on the 13th evening we were all having dinner at the same hotel when the names of the first Central Cabinet of Pakistan were announced. We, with Mr. Hassan Ispahani, Mr. Shaheed Suhrawardy, then Chief Minister of Bengal, and Mr. Altaf Hussain, Editor of *Dawn*, Karachi, were all dining at the same table. Seven ministers had been appointed and from Bengal Fazlur Rahman, a name which most of us had never heard and very few people seemed to know anything about, had been included. All the outstanding Bengal leaders had been left out. Nawab Muhammad Ismail Khan and the Raja of Mahmoodabad had not been encouraged to come to Pakistan, and some other members of the Muslim League Working Committee who could have handled a number of departments creditably were not included in the Cabinet. It was clear that only the Prime Minister's yes-men

had been included. What a short-sighted policy, that in a Ministry none who could come up to the Prime Minister's ability had been included, and instead of having the best available talent in the country handling each department, some unknown persons had been selected. Moreover the appointment of only seven Ministers was inadequate. As soon as the Bengal leaders saw the list, Hassan left the table, Suhrawardy and Altaf Hussain were very depressed, and none of us knew what to say. This was not only the case in the Centre but in every province, whichever party came into power appointed their own stooges only, so that in some cases persons were given departments about which they knew nothing. In many places, staunch and able leaders who possessed administrative experience had been left out. Moreover, even during the elections to the Provincial Assemblies the Muslim League tickets for election to the Assemblies were given to the favourites of the men in power. What a tragedy for a young nation with a superhuman task before it, that during the crucial years of its development it should be placed in the hands of inexperienced people. Could there have been a greater blunder than this? The unstable foundations were thus laid, and constant changes after that were inevitable.

It was at the reception to meet Lord Louis Mountbatten at the Governor-General's house that we learnt of the Radcliffe Award giving the Muslim majority district of Gurdaspur, the roadway to Kashmir, to India, and about the division of the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal. The Radcliffe Award came as a bombshell to all Muslims, including those who had been working with him, because until that date they had been given to understand that the Muslim majority areas of Gurdaspur district would, ipso facto, be included in Pakistan. It was a great blow to all Muslims, even the Quaid-i-Azam. He had put his full trust in Radcliffe and no one could have imagined that, if not the whole district, at least the majority areas would not



be given to Pakistan. Over and above this, the partition of both the major provinces and the lines of demarcation were not just and fair. During the opening session of the Constituent Assembly, one could see that the Quaid and Lord Louis Mountbatten were not cordial to each other. The reception had been arranged on Independence Day, but because of such depressing news a gloom hung over it and there was no jubilation at all.

Tazi and I returned from Karachi on August 18, 1947. News of the influx of lakhs of refugees, train-loads of Muslims and compartments full of blood or dead bodies, had been filling the air of Karachi, so we rushed to Lahore after spending only nine days there. My uncle, Mian Abdur Rashid, the Chief Justice of Pakistan, who had gone to administer the oath of office to the Quaid-i-Azam in Karachi, asked Tazi and I to travel with him the same plane. When we reached our house, we found that in the bungalows on both sides Hindu and Gurkha soldiers had been stationed.

An exodus of Muslims had begun from East Punjab and people were pouring into Pakistan at Wagah, Khem Karan and other crossing places. A number of responsible citizens from Amritsar saw me and related incredible tales of happenings in Amritsar. Cart-loads of dead bodies were sent to Muslim houses and Muslim women were made to march naked in the streets. We learnt that over a lakh of the Muslim population had gathered in Sharifpura, one of the Muslim majority suburbs in Amritsar, and that the Sikhs were going to attack them that very night, and were begged to move in the matter immediately. I rang up a few officials, but they all said that such rumours were being heard everywhere and one should take them with a grain of salt, but we knew that the news was correct. Tazi immediately devised a plan and she went and saw the representative of the *Herald Tribune* and two or three other reporters of well-known

foreign papers and asked them to go and spend the night there, so that the Sikhs should think twice before attacking the poor, unarmed Muslims. They agreed to do so, but they had no conveyance to take them to Amritsar, so she gave them her own car and returned home in a taxi.

Killings started round about the city of Lahore and the Muslims in a Sikh village named Gunj, quite close to our village, Baghbanpura, were in danger of an attack. We came to know of this at about half-past eleven at night and the Nawab of Mamdot, the leader, was informed, but he said that there was no one to go there at that time of the night. Would Tazi rest? She went there with a few arms and Khan Muhammad Aslam Khan, Akbar's brother, at 11 a.m. and they arrived just in time to save the situation.

The Nawab of Mamdot rang me at 10 p.m. one evening and said that he had learnt from a reliable source that Batala city was to be attacked by the Sikhs that very night. The place was full of our tribesmen and the whole family of my aunt, Lady Rashid, was there, and he asked me to do whatever I could to save a huge massacre. Soon after the receipt of this message, Mian Ahmad Saeed, a cousin of Mian Sir Fazl-Hussain, rang up and gave me the same news and begged me to do something, as Batala was the seat of their family as well. I was very upset and I rang up Miss Maqueen, niece of Sir Francis Mudie, the Governor. She told me that the Governor had not been well and had gone to sleep, but I requested her to ask him to talk to me, as it was very urgent. He spoke to me on the telephone and I appealed to him to ring up the Governor-General of India, Lord Louis Mountbatten, and try to save Batala. I had sent my car to fetch Uncle Rashid and on his arrival I made him telephone Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, to ask him to prevent the massacre of the Muslims of Batala. Uncle talked to Panditji and he promised to

do his best. My mother was in New Delhi at the time, staying with my brother, Mian Muhammad Rafi, Secretary of the Central Assembly. I telephoned her and asked her to see Panditji early next morning and requested him to help the Muslims in Batala. She saw Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who respected her, and he promised to help in the matter. Tazi and I could not sleep the whole night but, thank God, Batala was saved.

Early next morning, we were having our breakfast when we heard someone crying and shrieking. The servants came and told us that a gentleman named Chaudhri Shafqat Rasul, a very influential tribesman from the Ferozepur district, had arrived and was weeping like a child and asking for me. When I met him, I found him in such a terrible state of collapse that he could hardly relate his woes. Tea was sent for, but he did not touch anything, and with the greatest difficulty we persuaded him to drink some water. Slowly when he calmed down, he told us harrowing tales of what had happened in the Ferozepur district. He said that he had come in by a circuitous route and had, by the grace of God, reached Lahore somehow. Over seventy thousand Muslims, including his family with two young grown-up daughters, were taking refuge on a small island between the canals, Sikhs from Faridkot State were practically surrounding them, and they might all be massacred any moment. He said that he would rather see his family dead than have his daughters falling into the hands of the ferocious Sikhs. The tales received from different places were that they were killing the elder members of the families and taking the girls away. He was sobbing and beseeching me to save the honour of his family. For two days I tried to pull every string possible, but without any success. Shafqat Rasul was frantic and practically going mad with grief. On the third day, I decided to seek the help of Brigadier Muhammad Ayub Khan, who was Second-in-Command of the Boundary Force, a joint command appointed by the

Boundary Commission to look after the interests of the communities on both sides of the border, as caravans were frequently being attacked in transit and had to be helped across. I rang up Ayub asking him to come to my house, and when he arrived, Chaudhri Shafqat Rasul explained everything to him. Ayub thought over it a while and then said that the only help he could give was to send Shafqat Rasul in one of their weapon-carrier cars, and he advised me to send a letter to the British Brigadier in charge of the force in Ferozepur. When he gave me the name, I was glad to find that I knew him well and had come into contact with him during my work in the Defence Council. Shafqat was sent that very evening with an escort to Ferozepur and my letter to the Brigadier. Ayub was very helpful and sent a whole regiment of soldiers with Shafqat Rasul to the spot. They arrived just in time, when the main attack of Faridkot Sikhs had started and the lives of all the innocent besieged Muslims were saved.

Soon after my return from Karachi, Tazi started getting fever and she had to leave for Murree under doctor's orders. I learnt that a refugee camp had been set up at Walton, about seven miles from Lahore and I rushed to see it. I found that Nawabzada Ata Muhammad Khan Leghari, a senior CSP officer, had been placed in charge of it. He was very glad to see me and asked me for all the help that I could possibly give him in organising the work and in looking after the women and children. Neither my sister nor Fatima Begum, President and Vice-President of the Muslim League Women's Committee, or Begum Tassaduq Hussain, the Secretary, were in Lahore, so I called a meeting of the Muslim League Women's Committee myself. Within a week, a number of women's sub-committees for collecting food, clothes and money, and for providing organised help were working. A corps of workers with badges was organised and hours of work allocated to the different sections. Begum Liaquat Ali Khan



arrived in Lahore on September 17, and a meeting of women was called by Miss Maqueen, the Governor's niece, at Government House. I learnt there that Begum Tassaduq Hussain had been nominated to represent Pakistan at the United Nations Assembly in New York. Miss Maqueen had suggested in her speech that a number of women's committees for relief work should be set up, and when I told her and Begum Liaquat Ali about the sub-committees that had been organised and were already working, they were rather surprised. At my suggestion, it was decided that a large meeting of women be held at Government House and a Women's Voluntary Service, on the lines of the British Women's Voluntary Service, should be organised. Rana Liaquat Ali was anxious that Tazi should take charge of it and a telegram was sent to Murree to ask her to return to Lahore. Tazi organised the voluntary service of women, which did inestimable good in the next few months. We asked Begum Liaquat Ali to get us a central building where one could be set up and the house of Rai Bahadur Ram Saran Das at 11, Egerton Road was selected for the purpose. The keys were handed over to me and I asked a tehsildar to accompany us and have it opened. When I entered the house, I found that it was full of very costly articles of furniture, paintings, carpets, safes and other things. I had most of the expensive things packed and stored away in locked rooms and had them and the safes sealed. While we went home to have lunch, one of my clerks, whom I had stationed at the house, came rushing to inform me that the clerks of the revenue officers concerned had brought a truck and were filling it with valuables and taking them away. Tazi rushed to the spot with a cousin and they gave these people a piece of their mind, and stopped them from moving anything. Locks worth Rs 60 were purchased and the things carried into the house; even refrigerators and heavy things were moved and then locked in, and the place was sealed. About two or three months later, when Mr. Gopal Das, son of Rai Bahadur Ram Saran Das, came to



Lahore to fetch his movable property and I helped him to have the things packed, a number of refugee women belonging to high families of East Punjab, who were working in the office of the Pakistan WVS, came to see me and tried to stop me from doing it. They said that their houses in Jalandhar, Ludhiana and elsewhere, full of expensive items, had been looted and they had lost everything. Why should Hindu refugees be allowed to take their things away? I replied that it was our duty to show them what honesty and integrity meant, and that old and valued associations had not been broken in spite of Partition. When Mr. Gopal Das learned how their things had been taken care of he came to thank us personally.

Refugee women and children were suffering a great deal in camps, especially the orphan children, and we decided to put them in a spacious evacuee building. I contacted the Minister in charge and asked him to give us the Ganga Ram Girls School building, situated on Jail Road. He told me that the building had been reserved by the Education Department and advised me to ask them to lend it to us for the time being. The Secretary of Education agreed, the Department concerned gave the keys to me to have the building opened, and an Indian Christian magistrate was asked to accompany me. The rooms were opened, and before handing it over to the lady in charge, I asked the magistrate to prepare two lists of all the furniture and other things, one to be given to the Superintendent and one to be kept by him. Sitting down to write, he asked me what he should put down in the list. I asked him what he meant by it; a list of everything in the building was to be prepared. He smiled and said that I was only the second person he had come across out of all those he had to deal with who had told him to make a note of everything in a list of this type.

Begum Liaquat Ali and I were working together in the

organisation of such things as the work in the camps. The Pakistan WVS were doing excellent work and I was told by the officers in charge of certain sections of the camp that when persons died and cholera was suspected, it was the women volunteers who would unhesitatingly lift the dead bodies when men refused to do so. The Lahore public was wonderfully kind and whenever an appeal for food was made on the radio, regardless of the time of the day, shopkeepers, housewives and others would immediately send to the camps whatever they possibly could. This was apart from the food which was pouring into the camps regularly every day. One day, when Rana Liaquat Ali and I went there late in the evening and our car drove through three rows of dead bodies on each side of the road, we found that thousands of people were without food, as the train carrying fuel had not arrived from Changamanga. It was nearly half past nine and even a radio appeal could not have got us the amount of cooked food required to feed thousands of refugees. We did not know what to do, and on my return home, just as I was getting out of the car, I fainted. It was impossible to forget the little faces of the hungry children and the cries of young people clamouring for food. Begum Liaquat Ali called the Punjab Cabinet and she gave them hell. Nawabzada Liaquat Ali used to relate how, on his return after an important Cabinet meeting at 11 p.m., he found the Punjab Ministers sitting wordless while Rana Liaquat Ali scolded them like small children.

The women volunteers had lifted over twenty little babies from the rows of dead bodies where their mothers lay. To get the refugees out of trains full of blood; women out of the carriages without shoes or even *dopattas* (scarfs) and often with hardly any clothes on, crying for those gone or left behind; to see so many orphaned girls and boys—all this was indeed most painful. I advised Begum Liaquat Ali to organise a Women's National Guard, which she did, and the first meeting was held at my house.

A number of people I came across suddenly started talking against Brigadier Sardar Muhammad Ayub Khan, the Muslim representative on the Boundary Force, and attributing to him the wrong policies that resulted in bloodshed and suffering for the Muslim refugees. I was upset, because we knew how much Ayub had been doing to lessen the hardships suffered by Muslims and how he had been helping destitute Muslims in the trains and by the wayside. A number of my own relations had been brought to Lahore from Simla, from the refugee camp in the Delhi Fort and from Batala by the Boundary Force, in trains and trucks under their protection, and most of them were full of the kind help given to them by Sardar Ayub and his officers. I tried to probe the matter and, to my surprise, I found that some unwise Punjab officials, whom the public had approached, had been saying that these policies were being framed by the British General in command of the Boundary Force and Hindu Generals, with the help and advice of Sardar Ayub. Tazi and I contradicted such rumours and presented the real facts to the representatives of the public. When we talked to Sardar Ayub Khan about it, he told us what his difficulties were and said that he would like the Quaid-i-Azam to know about them. I rang up Quaid-i-Azam and while I was talking to him he wanted to know what Brigadier Ayub's advice would be: when I told him that he was there with me, Quaid said that he would like to talk to him. Sardar Ayub told the Quaid-i-Azam that the Boundary Force was not serving the purpose for which it had been organised and he advised him that it should be dissolved and they could take care of the work on the Pakistan side of the border. The Quaid-i-Azam moved in the matter and the Force was dissolved.

I received a letter from the Chief Minister, the Nawab of Mamdot, asking me to take charge of the work of bringing refugee girls from East Punjab. I wrote a reply the very next day, saying

that it would not be possible for me to do so because of my legislative work in both the assemblies, especially of the Constituent Assembly. The letter was despatched and delivered, and the peon book was signed by his secretary. After twenty-eight days, Mr. Biscoe, Divisional Superintendent of the NWR, came to see me and told me that the Nawab of Mamdot had complained to him about my not having sent a reply to such an important letter and that was why the work for bringing the abducted girls to Pakistan had been delayed. I looked at him in surprise, called my clerk and showed him the peon book. On ringing up the Chief Minister, I learned that the letter had been lying all that time with his secretary, Wali Muhammad. Fatima Begum was asked to take charge of the work which had been pending because of the secretary's mistake.





# Memories of Partition

Mian Amiruddin

The Shahalmi area within the walled city of Lahore was the stronghold of the Hindus. It was like an impregnable fortress. Countless weapons and ammunition were stored there, and the Hindus were sure that nothing could happen to Shahalmi. But when we launched our (Molotov) cocktails the Shahalmi fort could not withstand the attack. As the locality burned down, the Hindus lost heart and began to move towards Amritsar. At some distance from the rear of my house there was a big Hindu mansion which served as a stockpile of arms and petrol. It was consumed in the flames of its own petrol.

There were many Hindus and Sikhs who had personal relations with the Muslims and had sought refuge with them. I myself rescued many Hindu and Sikh friends from their vulnerable residences and conveyed them to safe places under a hail of bullets. Dozens were taken to the railway station by me and put into trains. At a number of places in East Punjab non-Muslims gave refuge to their Muslim friends. But that terrible catastrophe did not affect personal and family relations. It raged at the national level. The Hindus and Sikhs were one nation, the Muslims another. It was a clash between two nations.

One day as I was returning home and passing before the residence of the late Hakim Faqie Muhammad Chishti, I saw a Muslim boy running and being chased by a military officer and a soldier. The boy said to me, "They want my metal helmet." I asked the two men what was up when the boy ran away and hid in the entrance of my house which was nearby. The two of them pointed their guns at me and asked, "Tell us, where is that boy hiding?" as if I was instrumental in letting him escape. God alone knows what prevented them from firing at me. Another

day I was returning home somewhat late from outside the city which came under curfew at about sunset. I was stopped by armed soldiers. I had to tell them that I was Mayor of Lahore and I too had some responsibility for maintaining the peace and for that I had to go out. They wouldn't let me go ahead. So, re-tracing my steps, I spent the night with Qureshi Muhammad Zakir.

In those days of rioting and killing, there was one phenomenon that deserves special attention. People set fire to houses, and in the process they killed some one too, but they never touched valuables like gold and silver, expensive clothes and other precious objects. Things worth millions of rupees lay in the empty houses of Hindus and Sikhs till the actual partition. I think it was when responsible persons claiming to be leaders sullied their hands with this loot that the common people shed their inhibitions and began to follow suit.

It was really marvellous the way the Muslims of Amritsar put up a fight against the Hindus, and especially the Sikhs. The city was a stronghold of the Sikhs, but they fared badly at the hands of the Muslims. However, after the announcement of June 3, when it became obvious that Punjab was to be divided, the Muslims too began to look at things from a more realistic angle. Before the partition a sort of subsidiary administration had been set up for those parts of Punjab and Bengal where non-Muslims were in a majority. Under this arrangement, Muslim and non-Muslim officers began to be transferred to places where their co-religionists were in strength. Thus by the end of July dozens, in fact hundreds, of families had moved from Amritsar to the safety of Lahore. And as the actual day of Partition approached, more and more Muslim families from Amritsar shifted to Lahore. Similarly, the non-Muslims of Lahore were gradually moving towards Delhi and Jalandhar.

The result of this was that the first to get the best houses and the best properties of non-Muslims were the Muslims of Amritsar. There were groups which occupied palatial mansions and didn't know how to switch off an electric fan. Around Partition day, whole caravans began to stream into Lahore from other districts of East Punjab too. One night we were told that about a hundred thousand refugees had arrived all of a sudden. We appealed to the inhabitants of Lahore that everyone should cook as much bread, *rotis*, as they could and deposit them at the nearest police station. The result was that by the morning we had a stock of almost a million *rotis*. We went to greet the caravan. Many of them were in such a state of shock and physical deterioration that they could only consume a few sips of tea, but even this heartened them.

We brought one family to our house. Mian Aslam, my brother, took over a baby girl whose mother was dumb. Later the girl was married to a relation of Mian Aslam's wife and still lives in his house. Another girl was adopted by Brother Aminuddin. She too was married to an affluent young man working in Glaxo and is very happy. I assumed responsibility for two boys and a girl. These girls too were ultimately married off and settled, but the boy wouldn't study and works as a chauffeur with us.

The people of Lahore gave a right royal reception to the newcomers. Cauldrons of rice could be seen cooking all over the place for distribution among the refugees. I had a whole stockpile of rice left with me by some Hindus. People would come to take this rice from me and spend their money on getting it cooked. I think even the poorest of Lahoris did not lag behind in this service.

There was the problem of housing the refugees in the

property left by the departing Hindus and Sikhs. I said to the Deputy Commissioner that not everyone was going to tell the truth about their social and economic status in East Punjab. So it would be advisable to get members of the legislative assembly and municipal commissioners of every city and town in East Punjab to undertake the allotment of evacuee houses to the refugees, for only those officials could certify their background. Also, many Muslims in Lahore had been tenants of non-Muslims, and they should not be ignored in the distribution of residential accommodation. I am sorry to say my advice was ignored. Everyone who came for a house was asked to fill up a form stating that he belonged to such-and-such place and his word about his status was accepted. The result was a terrible kind of mal-distribution. Some decent people who had been wealthy back home could not get a hut to live in while liars and unscrupulous people became the owners of palatial mansions.

Many of the latter obtained the forms free and then sold them to their own friends and acquaintances. Some of the experiences were most painful. Lost sisters and killed mothers were forgotten in the process of grabbing houses, and nobody seemed to be bothered about the girls abducted in East Punjab and the insolence and cruelty experienced during the journey to Pakistan. I could never imagine that the memory of the sufferers could be so short. Refugees began to loot refugees, and the new game wiped out from their minds all images of what they had gone through, let alone any thought of seeking vengeance for the bloody deeds witnessed by them.

I had also advised the Deputy Commissioner that all shops should be sealed and whoever was given one worth a lakh of rupees should be asked to pay Rs 60,000 to the government at his convenience. The government was hard-pressed for funds, for it had no money. But no regulatory system could be devised.



Soon there was such a mad rush for shops that one couldn't even imagine the likes of it. Officers who belonged to East Punjab began to show favours to refugees from their area. Those from IJP did not consider anyone else as a genuine refugee, and behaved as if all others had come to Lahore for sightseeing. Officers from Jalandhar would only patronise Jalandhris, particularly the Pathans from that district broke all bounds and limits of equity in their favouritism and nepotism. This also applied to officers and refugees from Ambala.

In the distribution, or rather, looting of movable property too justice and honesty were nowhere to be seen. Those with clout and influence set the ball rolling, and their corrupt example was followed by their underlings and by the general public. Take just one case. In the Lahore Fort goods worth lakhs were stored. In today's currency it would be worth crores. But they were auctioned away — an article worth Rs 100 went for Rs 10, and the official in charge of the auction took his cut. I live near the fort and I saw all this with my own eyes. The dishonesty and corruption were on a gargantuan scale.

There was an institution, the Lahore Poor House, near Badshahi Mosque. Located inside Masti Gate it was run by the Hindus as a welfare home and did very useful work. One day an inmate rang me up that the police wanted the keys to the food godown. I rushed to the place, stopped the police from going ahead and informed the Director of Food, I.U. Khan. Only the moong *daal* lying there was valued at Rs 36,000. All the stocks were then shifted to the Food Department Leaving two sacks of the *daal* for the use of the inmates.

There are so many memories connected with the days of partition. Some of the incidents are still very clear in my mind. Once, a few days before actual independence day, when Muslims



were being killed in East Punjab, I was told that sixty Muslim cadets from the Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dun were leaving by train to report back after a vacation. It was obvious that their lives would be in danger while travelling through East Punjab, but the boys were adamant that they must go for it was a matter of military discipline. They were all around 14 years of age. It was imperative that they should be stopped at once because their train was ready to leave after some time. Not knowing what to do, I rushed to Nawab Mamdot so that he should take some steps. He pleaded his inability to help. In a panic I picked up the telephone directory and started ringing up various numbers on Lahore railway station. After getting many Hindu and Sikhs officials, I at last connected a Muslim railway man, a Train Examiner. He was impressed by my story and promised to find fault with the brakes of the train. This he did, for the train could not start its journey without the Train Examiner's giving his assent to the brakes. In the meantime, measures were adopted to detain the boys.

On another occasion too a Train Examiner came to our help. Someone informed me on telephone that a train fully loaded with military equipment was about to leave for India from the Cantonment railway station. I talked to Zafrul Ahsan, the Deputy Commissioner. He told me there was a telegram from the supreme commander that the train be allowed to move out. In desperation I rang up Ghulam Ahmed, the Cantonment Magistrate and asked him to do something to prevent the train from leaving Lahore. At the same time, I made a mention of the powers of Train Examiners. Ghulam Ahmed immediately arranged with the relevant Train Examiner to prohibit the train's departure.

Again, one day when Qurban Ali Khan, Inspector General of Police, was sitting with me, we received telephonic information that a train with currency notes worth crores of rupees was to

leave soon for India The report had come from Mian Anwar Ali, DIG. He was directed to detain the train, but he expressed doubt whether he could do so without the approval of Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, and it was too late at night to contact him. This time too we adopted the stratagem of failed brakes and had the train stopped with the help of a Train Examiner. Soon afterwards we found that the currency notes were actually being sent to Karachi, not India, for they were torn and soiled and had to be destroyed. So we immediately made the train brakes workable.

The war in Kashmir had started and petrol was in short supply there. Some of us managed to collect 18,000 gallons of petrol but the question was how to convey it to the place where it was needed. Colonel Dara and other friends were perplexed. I suddenly had a brainwave and got the water tankers of the Lahore Corporation filled with the petrol. The convoy left for its destination under the command of Colonel Dara. So what if the roads of Lahore were not sprinkled with water for a couple of days! Thus I found that if the will is there a way can be found, but you also need courage. Actually this petrol was meant to be despatched to Jammu which had already been occupied by India, but some patriotic-minded person had detained it in Lahore. The only problem was how to send it to the Kashmir front, and this is where the Corporation's water tankers came in useful.

There was another incident that deserves mention. During the last days of 1947 or early 1948, Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas and Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim and suggested that the extensive property of Majarajah Hari Singh in Lahore and its environs should be handed over to Azad Kashmir so that refugees from occupied Kshmir could be monetarily helped. They had met the Deputy Commissioner but he had disappointed them. Even Nawab Mamdot, Chief Minister of West Punjab, had turned down the request. As a last resort they came to me to find a way out.

I sent for Maharajah Hari Singh's Agent, a Kashmiri Muslim and put the proposal before him. He left saying that he sympathised with our programme but was helpless. He was the Maharajah's personal servant and couldn't be disloyal to him. Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas was dejected and wanted to leave but I asked him to stay on till my return. I then briefed one of my servants, Badruddin by name, to show the Agent's residence to a group of young men who should go there and make a demonstration against him. He must make sure that the boys were equipped with bamboo staves. Then, when the demonstration was at its loudest, he (Badruddin) should get there and tell the boys that I was annoyed at this show of force and that they should not harass the Agent Sahib and disperse peacefully. This Badruddin did, with the result that the Agent was overtaken by panic and fled from Lahore.

I directed the employees of his office to come to me with all the documents of the property. Then I sent a message to the main tenants of Landa Bazaar and Serai Sultan to come over and see me. I asked them, "Do you want to pay rent to Hindus or to Muslims?" They did not need much conviction, so new lease deeds were signed by them. I did the same in the case of sixty squares of land at Jallo and asked the agricultural tenants whether they wanted to pay rent to the Hindu Maharajah or to Muslim Kashmir. In their case too new papers were drawn up and signed. A similar procedure was followed in regard to Haveli Dhyani Singh in the walled city and the Sunnyview Hotel. All these properties worth crores of rupees were transferred in the name of a committee. Later when Mr Mushtaq Ahmed Gurmani became Minister for Kashmir Affairs he praised the manner in which I had enriched the Azad Kashmir government. The income is still being received by that government.

(Translated from Urdu)

## ***Contributors***





## Madan Lal Khurana

Madan Lal Khurana was born in Lyallpur (present Faisalabad, Pakistan) in 1936. He was only 11 years old when he left his native town for India. In India, he rose to the position of Chief Minister of Delhi.

## Alys Faiz

Alys Faiz was born in London. She came to Amritsar, India in 1938 to visit her sister Christabel Taseer and her brother-in-law, Dr. M. D. Taseer. Dr. Taseer was then Principal of MAO College, Amritsar, where Faiz Ahmed Faiz was a lecturer in English.

In 1941, Dr. Taseer was invited to become Principal of S.P. College, Srinagar. Faiz and Alys were married in Srinagar the same year. Their *nikah* was performed by Sheikh Abdullah of Kashmir.

Alys Faiz was both a teacher and journalist during the long years that she has lived in India and Pakistan. She taught in Simla, Amritsar, Karachi and Lahore. She edited the women's and children's pages of *The Pakistan Times* from 1951 to 1962.

She was associated with a number of social welfare agencies, worked with UNICEF in Islamabad and as Assistant Editor *Viewpoint*, an English language weekly of Lahore.

She had two married daughters and four grandchildren. She lived permanently in Lahore.

## Satish Gujral

Satish Gujral was born in Jhelum, West Punjab, in December 1925. He studied at the Mayo School of Arts, Lahore, and later at the JJ School of Arts, Bombay. Following Partition, the family moved to the Indian half of the Punjab. Satish Gujral worked as a graphic artist with the Punjab government for two years. In 1952 he won a scholarship to study art in Mexico, where he apprenticed himself to David Alfaro Siqueiros and collaborated on murals with Diego Rivera. Since his return to India in 1954, he has lived in New Delhi.

Over the past five decades he has achieved world renown and critical acclaim for his work as painter, sculptor, muralist, graphic designer and architect. He is married to Kiran Ram Nath, an artist in her own right, who is deeply involved in crafts and interior design. They have a son and two daughters.

Satish Gujral has won numerous national and international awards. He is an honorary fellow of the Indian Institute of Architecture. He has been honoured by the states of Punjab and Delhi. His name is included in the International Dictionary of Arts and Artists published by Macmillan (UK).

## Som Anand

Som Anand, born in Lahore, spent his childhood and youth in that city where his father, Faqir Chand Anand, was a respected banker. Som grew up totally free of religious bias, perhaps because he always consorted with Muslims who shared his world-view. When partition took place, the Anands decided to stay on in Model Town, Lahore, and Som was a witness to the communal excesses which took place at the time. In this loving and sensitive memoir, which recalls a pre-partition Lahore of

harmony and peace, Som seeks to restore his spiritual links with the great city of his childhood.

In Model Town, the suburban hideout of the wealthy aristocracy, the Hindus and Muslims lived in social isolation from each other but were friendly. In Ichhra, a Lahore suburban village, Som moved about with the followers of Allama Mashriqi, founder of the Khaksar movement. In the walled city, he mixed with the Fakirs of Fakir Khana. He saw Ataullah Shah Bukhari calm down a crowd that had just broken the head of Zafar Ali Khan, the editor of *Zamindar*. He was friendly with the Bedis, and knew the Englishwoman Freda Bedi who wrote her book about Punjabi women while she waited for her communist husband to be released from prison.

Som Anand was a columnist for *Imroze* Lahore, for five years until the paper and its sister publication, *The Pakistan Times*, were overtaken by the martial law regime of F. M. Ayub Khan. Eventually, Som left for India where he now works as a freelance journalist on the editorial staff of *Savera* and *Adab-i-Lateef*. He went away to India after Partition and wrote some excellent stories, *Chhatta Darya* (Lahore Diary of 1947) and *Satwan Asman* being the most well-known, on the havoc caused by partition. A noted columnist, his 'Pyaz ke Chhike' appeared in *Naya Zamana* and *Milan* with unfailing regularity for 25 years. From the time *Awadh Punch* was published in Lucknow, humour and satire occupied a prominent place in Urdu literature. Fikr Taunsvi enriched this tradition. He was a gifted writer with acute sensitivity to human tragedies. He died in 1987.

## Pran Nevile

Pran Nevile was born and educated in Lahore. An MA in Economics from Government College, he began his career as a

journalist in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. He was later inducted into the Indian Foreign Service which he left prematurely to join the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

A freelance writer since his retirement, Nevile has contributed articles to leading newspapers and journals on a variety of subjects, besides economics. *Lahore: A Sentimental Journey* is his first full-length literary work.

## **B. C. Sanyal**

B. C. Sanyal was born in Dibrugarh, Assam in 1902. He lost his father Charu Chandra Sanyal when he was only four years old. His first introduction to a work of art was an oleograph print of King Edward VII in his classroom which was later replaced by that of King George V. He joined Serampur College in 1920 and made frequent visits to Calcutta. The special Congress Session was a great attraction for him. At the same time, he attended lectures at the University Institute of Calcutta by eminent speakers such as Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee, B. P. Pal and Annie Besant. He gave up general studies and joined the Government School of Art, Calcutta in 1923.

During his time in the Art School he received two awards in sculpture from the Calcutta Society of Fine Arts. However, the six years which he spent at the Art School left a sense of unfulfilment in him.

Sanyal left for Lahore in 1929. The purpose was to prepare a bust-portrait of Lala Lajpat Rai who had died owing to police beating in Lahore. Almost at the same time as Bhagat Singh was executed by the British, Sanyal finished Lajpat Rai's portrait amidst political unrest. In the early 1930s he joined

the Mayo School of Art. He was given charge of the painting and modelling departments. He then decided to make Lahore his home.

He set up a studio at the Forman Christian College in the mid-1930s. In 1936, he started a new studio-cum-teaching workshop in the Dayal Singh Building on the Mall. The inauguration of the studio took place with an exhibition of paintings, the first of its kind in Lahore.

During 1936-47, he took part in the discussions on Socialist Realism initiated by Indian poets, writers and other creative people. At about this time he met Snehlata, his future wife. He attended the Kisan Conferences at Bhakna and Jhandiala villages in Punjab. When the Second World War broke out, he sent sketches of his anti-Japanese posters to Delhi.

After partition, he moved to Delhi. He lived in Nizamuddin Delhi, a gifted and energetic artist and died a few year's ago.

## **Amrita Pritam**

Amrita Pritam was born in August 1919 in Gujranwala. A poet, novelist and short story writer, she had more than seventy-five books to her credit. She was the first woman recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1956 which she won for *Sunehre*, a collection of poems. She received the Padma Shree from the President of India in 1969.

She received the Vaptsarov Award (International) from Bulgaria in 1980 and Bharatiya Jnanpith award in 1982 for a collection of poems *Kagaz Te Kanvas*. She was by far the most articulate and uninhibited among women writers of India.



She was also a Member of the Rajya Sabha.

## **Begum Jahanara Shah Nawaz**

Jahanara Shah Nawaz, born in 1896, belonged to the Arain Muslim community. She was the daughter of Sir Muhammad Shafi. She was educated at Queen Mary's College, Lahore and married Mian Shah Nawaz, a leading criminal lawyer of Lahore.

Jahanara entered public life very early. She participated in All India Muslim League politics but was elected as a Unionist member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly in 1937, and reelected in 1946. She was Parliamentary Secretary, Education and Public Health, during 1937-43.

She was elected as a member of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan in 1947 and played an important part in Pakistani politics.

Jahanara Shah Nawaz wrote *Father and Daughter* (an autobiography) and an Urdu novel, *Husan Ara Begum*.

## **Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan**

Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, Pakistan's first foreign minister after independence, later rose to become President of the General Assembly of the United Nations and President of the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

His memoirs, edited by Ashiq Hussain Batalvi, shed fascinating light on the men and events that have shaped the post-Second World War history of our times. Sir Zafrullah's personality which emerges from the book is an engaging one, of a man

who was gentle, unassertive and introverted. *Tehdith-i-Nemat* is his famous autobiography.

## **Khushwant Singh**

Khushwant Singh, a distinguished writer and best-known columnist of India was born in 1915 in Hadali, now in Pakistan, and educated at Government College Lahore, King's College, and the Inner Temple in London. After he gave up his law practice he joined the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1947, and was sent on diplomatic postings to Canada and London, and later to Paris with UNESCO.

His journalistic career spans almost five decades, during which he was the editor of celebrated publications such as *Yojna* (1951-3), *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (1969-79), *National Herald* (1978-9), and *The Hindustan Times* (1980-3).

His first novel, *Train to Pakistan* won him the Grove Press Award for the best work of fiction in 1954. His other novels include *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* and *Delhi*. He has also published a two-volume scholarly history of the Sikhs, several translated works, and a non-fiction work on Delhi, its nature and current affairs.

Khushwant Singh was a Member of Parliament (1980-6), and received numerous awards in recognition of his literary attainments. In 1984 he returned the Padma Bhushan, awarded him in 1974, in the wake of the Golden Temple tragedy.

## **Prakash Tandon**

Prakash Tandon was born in 1911 at the headworks of Balloki Dam on the river Ravi in Pakistani Punjab. His father

was an irrigation engineer with the government and was posted frequently to various places in West and South Punjab, the family shifting with him to each new posting. Parkash Tandon took a degree in science from Government College, Lahore in 1929, and then went to England where he studied commerce at the University of Manchester and later qualified as a chartered accountant. Upon his return to India in 1937, he joined the Unilever subsidiary and eventually became its first Indian chairman. He left the company in 1968 to join the public sector, first as chairman of the State Trading Corporation of India for four years, and then of the Punjab National Bank for three years. He served on the boards of several other institutions such as the Reserve Bank of India, the Food Corporation of India, Hindustan Steel and Hindustan Aeronautics and has been part of several committees formed by the states and the central government. He taught at Berkeley, Boston, California, Chandigarh, Delhi and Ahmedabad. The three books that comprise his autobiography—*Punjabi Century*, *Beyond Punjab* and *Return to Punjab*—are regarded as modern classics and are published together in Penguin Books as *Punjabi Saga*.

## Fikr Taunsvi

Taunsvi's collections, include *Chaupat Raja*, *Warrant Girafavi Badnam Kitab*, *Chatta Darya* and *Fikrnama*. Fikr's satire is humane. He rescued it from vapidness and violence, the artificiality of *daastan* and *quissa* and above all from the hollowness and hypocrisy of the essay. One of his books, *Chaupat Raja*, is dedicated to the fool, who always makes wise remarks about the foolish deeds of wise men. An intellectual who never went to a university, his satire is sharp and incisive. Although he is dead, his *Piaz ke Chilke* is still alive.

Fikr wrote extensively on the *galli-kutchas* of Delhi, its beggars

and buses. "The Delhi bus is the heartbeat of the city. When it stops, Delhi becomes lifeless. Half the population is always in movement till midnight. It connects the lover with his beloved, the exploiter with the exploited." More than a satirist, Fikr was a social historian who wrote volumes on middle class morality, the babudom of Delhi, the corruption in government offices, the pious frauds of religion and the barbarity of cultural institutions.

## Ahmad Salim

Ahmad Salim was born on January 26, 1945 at Pind Dadan Khan, Jhelum. He is a reputed Punjabi poet and writer across the borders. He supported the cause of the Bangladesh liberation war during 1971 and was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment and lashes.

He was Punabi language instructor at Sindh University, teacher in ethical behaviour at NED University Karachi, Punjabi language and literature teacher at Karachi University, visiting scholar at National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research Islamabad. He has been a contributor to *Dawn*, *Jang*, *Star*, *The Muslim*, *Frontier Post*, *Viewpoint*, *The Friday Times*, *Herald* and *Newsline*. He edited a number of journals during 1981-92.

He has written and compiled 75 books on culture, art, literature, history, politics and political history. He has translated many books and written plays for theatre groups in Lahore and Islamabad. He has also written several long plays and serials for Pakistan Television and Private Channels.

He is currently working with SDPI as Editor of the research journal *Paidar Taraqqi* and newsletter *Dharti*. Ahmad Salim is also involved in various research projects about working con-

ditions and occupational diseases of mine workers, minorities, domestic servants and the image of enemy in Pakistani history/social studies textbooks.



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The complete list of resources is also included in the publication.

Above all, I thank Hafizur Rahman for his translations from Urdu publications incorporated in this book.

Mr. Anuj Bahri and Bahri Sons are the true spirits behind the compilation, completion and production of this book. I am thankful for their contribution.

July 2001

Ahmad Salim  
Islamabad

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## Notes











"Last evening a bomb exploded in a cinema house in Bhai Gate. They say the bomb was of British manufacture. That is why fifty persons of Indian origin were killed by it. All the dead were Muslims"

*Cover Visual Source : Raghu Rai*

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